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# CLARA,

## *A TALE.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

La speme de' Malvagi
Suanisce in un momento,
Come spuma in tempesta o Fumo al vento
Ma de' Giusti la speme
Mai non cangia Sembianza;
Ed è l'istesso Dio la Cor Speranza.
METASIO GIOAS RE DI GIUDA.

VOL. II.

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1801.
[*T. Davison, Lombard-Street, White-Friars.*]

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# CLARA.

## A TALE.

### CHAPTER I.

THUS again ſome little degree of tranquillity reigned over the ſmall remains of St. Aubigny's family. Father Jerome was almoſt conſtantly with them. St. Aubigny could not yet bring himſelf to reflect with compoſure on the deaths of his children. Clara knew it; for a little dog, the favourite of Eleanor, had found its way from the cottage to which it had been ſent, and leaped delighted on St. Aubigny. She ſaw the tears run down his cheeks. "It is Eleanor's poor

Fidelle," ſaid Clara. As ſhe caught him up, and ran out with him, ſhe was met by Diego: "I am glad, ſignora," ſaid he, "to think poor Fidelle will have a friend in you. I have had him home ſometimes of an evening to comfort me; and when he hears the ſtorms he remembers he uſed to go out on ſuch nights with his miſtreſs, and he wines ſo piteouſly, as if he would go and bring her home;—but ſhe can never come back again. Ah, it ſeems but a day, ſince I ſaw you all merry together! but it pleaſes God that the buds ſhould be broken, and the flowers left to wither on the ſtem. It is all ſo ſudden, I can hardly think it true; and often ſtart as I open the little parlour door, to ſee nobody but you and my maſter. It is natural to love what belonged to thoſe we have loſt, and I hope it is not wicked to love Fidelle

ſo much as I do." "No, ſurely," ſaid Clara; "man might learn leſſons of fidelity and gratitude from this faithful race. They, regardleſs of toil and hunger, follow their maſter through the rough roads of adverſity; and he often weeps to think his dog is the only friend misfortune has left him." Clara, accompanied by Fidelle, for ſhe had now no other companion, would wander in the foreſt, or linger near the grave of Eleanor: ſhe thought of her melancholy exit, and dedicated the following ſonnet to her memory:

Daughter of ſorrow, now thy weary head
Has found its reſt: the ſtorm of life is paſt;
And now unheard by thee around thy bed
Howls unreprov'd the piercing northern blaſt.

That kindred virtue, which approving view'd
Thy life, her own beſt attributes diſcloſe;
Feels the ſtern ſentence of her law ſubdu'd,
And drops the tear of pity on thy woes.

Tho' rigid ſternneſs paſs unheeded by,
Or with reproach thy gentle ſhade aſſail;
Yet ſorrow here ſhall bend with tearful eye,
And ſwell with ſadder ſighs the evening gale:
Returning night ſtill hears thy Clara's moan,
Who weeps thy ſufferings, and forgets her own.

Clara never viſited the abode of death without thinking of her beloved Albert, and weeping his untimely fate. "Perhaps," ſaid ſhe, "my poor Eleanor is now with thoſe departed youths, and they are pitying the ſufferings of their leſs happy Clara. But did not my Eleanor ſay, with a prophetic voice, ſhe might meet me here? I will come then at the ſilent hour, when the ſpirits of the dead are ſuppoſed to be abroad." There was ſomething mournfully pleaſing in obeying the ſolemn injunctions of the departed, and ſhe was determined to viſit alone the grave of Eleanor.

Eleanor. But when the time drew near, ſhe felt her ſpirits fail: ſhe attempted to reaſon herſelf out of thoſe fears in vain: ſhe ſpoke of her intentions to Diego; the ſcrupulous attention he paid to the wiſhes of thoſe who were no more, determined him to accompany her. He often ſtarted at the ſhadows the moon threw acroſs the path: the way to the little chapel was overgrown with weeds and rank graſs; to avoid theſe, they paſſed by the church, the door of which was open. Diego told her it was often ſo, for the purpoſe of airing it. "Then why not go through it? it is a nearer and a better way." Diego aſſented, and they entered. The moon threw her beams acroſs the aiſle, and on the duſky faces of old monumental figures. Diego, terrified at the gloomy

ſilence, entreated her to return; but Clara, on entering the ſacred pile, felt an enthuſiaſm that raiſed her ſoul above its uſual timidity. She thought of the ſolemn ſervice that had been performed there over the relicts of her friend. She proceeded with firmneſs; but at the entreaties of Diego, permitted him to wait for her in the porch. She reached the part that joined to the place of interment: ſhe pauſed; a diſmal ſigh ſeemed to iſſue from the diſtant grave: ſhe looked towards it. The old yew waved its branches in the air; a light glimmered round the grave, and a human figure was bending over it. Clara recollected the words of Eleanor, 'and my ſpirit ſhall linger near my grave:' no longer daring to doubt, but petrified with fear, ſhe was unable to move.

move. The phantom approached—ſhe ſunk to the ground, and it bruſhed haſtily by her. In a few minutes ſhe again heard approaching ſteps, and a voice calling her by name. Returning reaſon told her it was the voice of Diego, and opened her eyes on a light that was carried by Jerome. His looks were calm and unruffled, but Diego's were pale and ghaſtly: he begged her to let him lead her from that dreadful place. When they had reached home, and Diego had ſhut the door, he told her that after he had gone back to the porch, he tried to amuſe himſelf by thinking of all the ſtories he had read or heard of about apparitions; when a figure of gigantic ſize ſtalked by him." "I ſaw it," ſaid Clara; "but it was the penſive ſhade of my beloved Eleanor."

"No, ſignora, it was ſome angry ghoſt; and it carried a blazing torch; and yet it was juſt like my poor old maſter, and it wore his dreſs too. I have heard, ſometimes theſe phantoms appear to warn us of death. I was ſorry to leave you, ſignora, but I was too much frightened to ſtay, ſo I ran home for the good father here, as ſpirits can have no power over holy men." "Daughter," ſaid Father Jerome, "let me hear no more of theſe nightly alarms; but the figure, I dare ſay, was really St. Aubigny, who, to be unobſerved at this ſecret hour, retires to weep over the grave of his child." "Holy father," ſaid Diego, "that cannot be, for he never talks about her; and even in the day-time, if he walks out, he never goes that way." "For which reaſon," ſaid Jerome, "I am ſtill more inclined to believe it." Clara thought the ſame, and they

they both agreed as to the neceſſity of removing St. Aubigny for a time from this ſpot; and Jerome promiſed he would the next day try to prevail on him to retire to a monaſtery, and allow Clara to take the veil. To aſſiſt him in this purpoſe, he would call in the Baron de Clifford; "he has done thy uncle ſome ſervices, which," ſaid Father Jerome, "have given him a kind of influence over him." Clara diſliked the idea of conſulting the baron on ſo delicate a ſubject; but his manners were much altered by the death of Albert, and the baſe conduct of Count Roderigo, who now never came near him, but aſſociated with the vileſt of mankind. But it was ſuppoſed he was kept from a fortune now his due, as avarice was a ſtrong feature

in the character of the baron. The idea of being a nun, and bidding an eternal farewel to the world, would have been once dreadful things to Clara St. Aubigny. They were now the objects of her choice: the world had nothing left for her; death had deprived her of all her friends, St. Aubigny excepted; and he was tottering on the grave.

## CHAPTER II.

THE evening came, and the baron and Jerome had been for two hours ſhut up with St. Aubigny. Clara received a ſummons to join them: ſhe obeyed it with alacrity: and as ſhe bent her knee to St. Aubigny, ſhe aſked when her life of religion muſt begin? "My child," ſaid he, "it muſt not be. I made a vow never to let thee take the veil." "And who had a right to extort that vow?" ſaid Clara. "Thy parents," anſwered he. "And one of thoſe," ſaid Clara, "was thy brother." "No, my

Clara, thou art a ſtranger to my blood." "A ſtranger! Holy Father! what canſt thou mean?" "Repoſe thyſelf, and liſten to my tale with calmneſs. Thou haſt heard me ſay I was a ſoldier: once at midnight, when I was returning to my quarters, I was ſeized, blindfolded, and carried into a ſtrange houſe. When the bandage was taken from my eyes, I found myſelf in a room with three or four people. A lady in a long cloak and a maſk took you from a bed, and gave you into my hands, with a ſtrong injunction to preſerve you, and paſs you on the world as a relation of mine, till your real parents ſhould claim you. A ſum of money and ſome jewels were given with you—'And I charge you,' ſaid the lady, 'by all the ſacred vows of our holy religion, to guard this child:

child as the precious relict of a noble family, who will one day claim her at your hands. But ſhould death deprive her of her friends, you muſt ſwear never to let threats or entreaties prevail on you to let her take the veil. This vow made, you will be ſuffered to depart.' I bent my knees, and called Heaven to witneſs that I would moſt religiouſly keep it. To the care of my wife I committed you; and we ſoon after returned to our native land. My own mournful tale thou haſt often heard: and but for thy ſake, my Clara, I would retire to a monaſtery, and end there my days of miſery." "Now," ſaid the baron, without regarding the tears that flowed from her eyes—" and now, fair orphan, my tale begins. The Baron Montalt was the brother

ther of my wife; he loved an orphan bred up by his mother, poor, but lovely, and not mean born. The young lord was ſent to the wars, with orders to think no more of Adelaide, who was to have been ſent to a convent; but ſhe followed her lover, who kept her ſo privately, that nobody knew her retreat. There ſhe became a mother; you are her child, and was by her delivered to the good Father St. Aubigny. The death of the Baron Montalt's mother happening at this time, he was recalled home, and being taken ill, he ſent for me, and diſcloſed the ſecret; promiſing, in caſe of his recovery, to become the huſband of Adelaide. A report was now circulated, that St. Aubigny, and all his family, had periſhed: news alſo arrived of the death of Adelaide.

laide. The baron was ſinking under theſe troubles, when his death was accelerated by the dreadful accident of his caſtle taking fire; and he was ſuffocated before any aſſiſtance could reach him." "Miſerable pair!" ſaid Clara; "I am now paying the forfeiture of your crime. Deprived in an inſtant of the only being who on earth I could call my friend, I am to become a poor deſerted outcaſt, without a place of reſt where I can lay my weary head." "O, my Clara!" exclaimed St. Aubigny, "I never will forſake thee; thou ſhalt ſtill be to me a child." "It muſt not be," ſaid the baron; "for though the child of diſgrace and miſfortune, ſhe is ſtill the niece of my beloved wife; and as ſuch, ſhall find her home in my houſe." "No, my lord," ſaid Clara, "let me not bring ſhame on a noble family;

family; let me be the poor wanderer nature deſigned me." "Pardon me, my lord," ſaid Father Jerome, "if I aſk how the Baron Montalt, whoſe ſoul was the reſidence of humanity, could be brought to ſeduce and deſert that orphan, whoſe virtues he reſpected, and who fled to his love for protection?" "Love," replied the baron, hurt at his queſtion, "perverts and leads into error many a worthy heart." "Not," ſaid Father Jerome, "ſuch hearts as the Baron Montalt's, glowing with ſentiments of the niceſt honour. I knew the young lord well, and have often wept at his extraordinary fate." The baron replied not, and Jerome took the hand of Clara, and led her from the room. It was ſettled that her birth ſhould ſtill be concealed, that ſhe

ſhould

ſhould retire to the baron's caſtle, and St. Aubigny be removed to the monaſtery. Clara heard this arrangement with a prophetic kind of dread, and ſhe ſhuddered to think into what hands ſhe was now to be placed. The carriage was to come for her the next evening, and ſhe entered, as ſhe felt for the laſt time, the chamber of St. Aubigny. He had all day been unuſually weak, and ſtill reſted on a couch; his countenance was pale and agitated; near him ſtood his two old ſervants: he held out his hand to Clara, feebly graſped it, tried to ſpeak, but the words died on his quivering lips. Jerome ſaw him overcome with grief; he knew the only remedy; he made a ſign to them to kneel, and began a prayer in a low and ſolemn voice. The heart of St. Aubigny aſcended

to

to heaven with it, and a beam of celeſtial brightneſs gleamed on his pallid face.—The prayer was ended, and St. Aubigny, in a hollow and broken voice, ſolicited Heaven to forgive the ſins, and receive the prayers of a poor broken-hearted old man: he ſpoke of thoſe who have no friends, and begged protection for the orphan Clara. She would have ſpoken, had not her loud ſobs prevented her: Jerome ſaw the neceſſity of their parting, and drew her from the room. St. Aubigny threw his eyes after her, ſtrained them for another look, and burſt into tears. Clara threw herſelf into the carriage that was ſent for her, and Jerome accompanied her to the caſtle. The baron was alone, and received her with tenderneſs. Unable to ſee company, ſhe was ſuffered to retire

to

to her own room, which was elegantly fitted up in the modern part of the caſtle. She regarded its ſplendour with a ſigh;—for how gladly would ſhe have exchanged it for her own humble room at St. Aubigny's!—and when ſhe aroſe in the morning, inſtead of viewing the cultivated beauty around, ſhe caſt her eyes towards the little church of St. Maurice, whoſe top, tipped with the riſing ſun, was ſcarcely viſible. She received a ſummons to breakfaſt, and would have ſent an excuſe, but recollecting ſhe was now indeed a dependant, ſhe joined the baron, Lady Maud, and Bertram: the former was in high ſpirits, and his gaiety ill accorded with the ſorrow he had pretended to feel for poor St. Aubigny. Lady Maud treated her with a conſtrained civility in the preſence

preſence of the baron, but the moment he left them, ſhe threw out the moſt bitter invectives on her paſt and preſent ſituation. Clara's ſpirit was broken, and ſhe burſt into tears, and left the room. She ſtrolled on the ramparts, where ſhe met a ſoldier, as the baron had always ſome in his caſtle. The man bowed to her as he paſſed, and ſhe heard him exclaim, "Poor victim!" ſhe knew him to be Baptiſt who had been once a ſervant to Albert. He knew her loſs; but why call her a victim? She was tempted to call him back, but at length determined to think no more of it. The baron now joined her, accompanied her round the gardens, and pointed out their beauties with a taſte all his own; but Clara thought ſhe knew his heart, and liked not the

the man, yet was obliged to conceal her ſentiments. She again begged to be permitted to retire to a convent: "Remember," ſaid he, "the ſolemn oath of St. Aubigny." "Ought it ſo ſtrictly to be regarded, my lord," ſaid Clara, "ſince ſhe who forced it is gone to the ſhades of death, and there ſunk all the ſchemes ambition planned for her unfortunate but innocent child? The partner of her crime is alſo gone: let not, then, the daughter live a perpetual ſtain on a noble family; but be hid within a convent's walls." "It muſt not be," ſaid the baron: "mention not thy unhappy parents, but let me ſtill ſuppoſe thee the niece of St. Aubigny." A week paſſed away heavily, and Clara ſaw without one pleaſurable emotion the

grandeur

grandeur that ſurrounded her. Her apartment was decorated with all that taſte could ſupply, and a cloſet was fitted up with her favourite authors. Her harp, her drawings, and even her little Fanchon, was ſent for, who was the daughter of Margaret, and Clara found nothing tended ſo much to comfort her as inſtructing this poor little girl. Clara had always been remarkably fond of children, but of this girl in particular. She ſoothed her agitated ſpirits by compoſing the following lines:

Childhood, I love to mark thy cherub ſmile,
Thy ſpring elaſtic, and thy buſy pace,
Anxious the painted inſect to beguile,
With fear, hope, tranſport, pictured on thy face.
And if thou ſee'ſt a parent's gliſtening eye,
Liſping wilt aſk to kiſs away her pain,
Let fall a trickling tear, thou know'ſt not why,
Then hie thee joyous to thy ſports again.

Ah,

Ah, who would check the raptures of thy mind
With ſerious warning of thy future doom!
Round infant brows a wreath of cypreſs bind,
And tear youth's flow'rets in their earlieſt bloom!
Few are the roſes that life's eve adorn;
Noon blights the buds that opened with the morn.

The baron was always polite, and even friendly, but her unhappineſs was not leſſened. All her requeſts to ſee St. Aubigny again were civilly, but firmly denied. "At length," ſaid the baron, one day, taking her hand, "it is time thy thoughts ſhould turn from St. Aubigny; and ſurely thou ſhouldeſt rejoice, if death, like a comforting friend, ſhould take a man ſo pious, yet ſo wretched." "I know it, my lord," ſhe replied; "but my ſelfiſh heart cannot bear to loſe its only friend." "Only friend! Ungrateful girl!" ſaid he. "Call me not ſo," ſaid the weeping

weeping Clara; "but ſorrow has broken my ſpirits, and made me regardleſs of words; and I think I could learn to rejoice, if Heaven would take to its reſt its beſt of ſervants, the faultleſs St. Aubigny. For while he lives, he lives to ſuffer: it is that thought which makes me wretched." "Then ſorrow is at an end," ſaid the baron, "for I have ſeen him breathe his laſt." "Then Heaven," ſaid Clara, "has gained a ſaint, and earth has loſt its brighteſt ornament." The baron ſaw ſhe wiſhed to be alone, and left her; but when ſhe met him an hour afterwards, ſhe was calm: yet in her heart ſhe doubly felt the miſery of her friendleſs ſituation; and in the ſolitude of her chamber wept uninterrupted the fate of St. Aubigny.

## CHAPTER III.

A THOUGHT darted now into her mind that St. Aubigny was not dead; that it was a ſcheme of the baron's to prevent her leaving the caſtle; and ſhe was determined to requeſt that Diego might be ſent for. She mentioned her wiſh to the baron; and the readineſs with which he granted it convinced her that her hopes were without foundation. She now tried to recollect all ſhe had to ſay to Diego, as poſſibly ſhe might ſee him no more; as age and ſorrow had nearly brought him to the grave, which had ſwallowed all her friends. In retracing them, ſhe thought of the paper Henry

ſaid he would leave at the convent of St. Agatha, and ſhe reproached herſelf for having ſo long neglected it. Diego came in the evening, and ſhe was pleaſed to ſee him look ſo compoſed; he even ſurveyed the apartment with a look of pleaſure, when he found it was Clara's: but it was checked by a ſigh, and followed by a tear, when he ſaw her pale emaciated countenance. "Ah, ſignora," cried he, drawing his hand acroſs his eyes, "I don't like this room, fine as it is, half ſo well as our little parlour at home, where I uſed to bar the ſhutters cloſe, put the largeſt logs on the fire, and ſweep up the hearth; and you uſed to draw round, when the wind howled, and the rain pattered on the roof; and poor maſter would move his arm-chair to let old Carlo come

by,

by, though he rubbed his wet coat againſt his legs; and then Catherine and I would call in a poor neighbour, and over a cup of warm ſpiced wine, I uſed to tell them of my ſoldier days." "Enough, my good Diego! O ſpare my bleeding heart, the remembrance of thoſe times! But ſpeak of my more than father—ſpeak of St. Aubigny. O tell me, was his departure eaſy?—did he not ſpeak of me?—did he not wiſh to ſee me?" "O yes, ſignora; and pined ſo when you went away!—but I comforted him as well as I could." Clara then aſked him what would become of him? If he would ſtay and live there, ſhe would requeſt it of the baron. He ſtarted at the propoſal, and ſaid, "he could not live there for all its riches." "What are thy reaſons?" ſaid

Clara. "O nothing, only it is a large diſmal place; and Father Jerome ſays I ſhall ſtay at the monaſtery, and he will take care of old Catherine." "It is well," ſaid Clara; "may bleſſings attend the holy father. But wilt thou, Diego, do me a laſt kind office?—Will thy aged limbs ſupport thee to the convent of St. Agatha?" "Ah no, ſignora, I fear they will not; but pray do not think of a convent. Again, remember the promiſe you made." "My good Diego, I do not mean to oppoſe the will of thoſe who ſtill detain me in the world: but thou muſt remember the good Father Nicholas; with him Henry left a paper, which he ſaid would clear his innocence; and in caſe of his death, but on no other account, it was to be delivered to me. The

fatal

fatal event has happened—poor Henry is no more; and that paper, he ſaid, would clear his fame to the world." "Did he?" ſaid Diego, with eagerneſs; "I will go this moment, then, and fetch it." "But," ſaid Clara, "thou haſt juſt told me thou wert not capable of ſuch a journey." "Ah, ſignora," ſaid the honeſt fellow, "I forgot it was ſuch a little way." "Little way!" ſaid Clara, "why it is a journey of ſome days." "But it is rare weather, and I know a neighbour who is going that way; ſo I will ſet out with the dawn." "Go then," ſaid Clara; "and good luck attend thee. I will count the hours till thy return: and be ſure thou delivereſt the paper into no hands but mine." "I will not, ſignora:" and, impatient to be gone, he took a haſty

leave. Nothing particular occurred to Clara during the week of Diego's abſence; but ſhe grew impatient for his return, as by this means ſhe hoped to let Father Nicholas know her preſent ſituation. The day was now cloſing, and a gloomy evening had thrown over it a ſhade that accorded with the penſive mind of Clara; ſhe took her uſual walk round the ramparts, and wandered to the northern wing of the caſtle. It had been long neglected, and part of it had fallen to ruins. She climbed over the heaps of rubbiſh; no foot but her own ſeemed to have been there for many years, yet the upper part was ſtrong and in good repair. She reached a window ſtrongly barred, and was ſurpriſed to ſee in this diſtant part of the caſtle a room that

ſeemed

ſeemed to have been recently inhabited; for ſome books were ſcattered about, and a crucifix ſtood on a table. She held by the bars of the window; the door of the room opened, and a woman entered with a long black veil, which, on throwing back, diſcovered a face ſo pale and thin, as no longer to appear human. She ſhrieked, ſpread her arms, and ran towards the window. Clara ſhrunk, unable longer to ſupport herſelf; and ſhe hurried over the rubbiſh, and ran to the habitable part of the caſtle. She leant againſt the wall to recover her breath. A voice called to her; a man approached, and at length ſhe ſaw it was Baptiſt.

"Why are you ſo frightened, lady?" ſaid he: "all here are not your enemies.

Old Diego wants to ſee you, and I came after you; but I could not have gone much farther, for beyond that corner is the north wing of the caſtle." "And I have been there," ſaid Clara. "Been at the north wing, ſignora! How could you go there; and what did you ſee?" "What ſhould I ſee?" aſked Clara. "Why, it is haunted; and they do ſay ſtrange things have been done there: but my lord is no bad maſter to me—I'll ſay nothing; but one of my comrades heard a noiſe among the ruins, and looking up, ſaw a tall woman covered with a veil."— "O God!" ſaid Clara, "I alſo ſaw her." "Why then, lady, let me call my lord, for he will believe you." "Do," ſaid Clara, and leant over the ramparts; then thinking how mean ſhe muſt appear in the

eyes

eyes of the baron by making a ſervant the confidant of her childiſh fears, ſhe called him back, and tried to convince him the perſon ſhe had ſeen was only a ſervant of the houſe. Baptiſt ſhook his head, and then took her to the place where Diego waited for her, for he would not come within the walls. "Ah, ſignora," ſaid he, in a tone of the deepeſt anguiſh, "I have had another piteous bad journey, and all to no purpoſe: Father Nicholas viſited a poor man that was put on ſhore, and ſuppoſed to have the plague; he caught it, and died; and all his papers, and every thing, was burnt by order of the lady abbeſs, who ſends you her bleſſings, and offers you a home in her convent." "I will accept it," ſaid Clara. "Do, my dear lady—do go and

leave this wicked caſtle." "Why doſt thou call it wicked caſtle, Diego?" ſaid Clara. "I don't know why, but old maſter uſed to ſay, great folks had more temptation to be bad, than poor ones; but I don't know how that can be. The baron has been a hard man; but he was good to maſter; and he is good to you, ſignora, and keeps you like a lady. So you had better ſtay where you are; and if any thing ſhould happen, come to St. Benedict, in the foreſt. But," ſaid the old man, "it is late, and I muſt go; thou wilt ſtay and ſleep at the caſtle. I ſhall go to Margaret's cottage," continued he. "God bleſs you, my dear lady, and ſend us better days!" "The holy Mother preſerve thee!" ſaid Clara; and waving her hand, turned into the houſe with an almoſt burſting heart. She

ſent.

ſent excuſes for not appearing at ſupper; and taking a lamp, went to her chamber. She thought of the figure in the north wing, and felt even the company of Fanchon as a kind of protection. The next morning ſhe found only the baron in the breakfaſt-room: he told her Lady Maud was gone out, and might not return till the next evening. Clara was ſurpriſed, but not concerned at her abſence, and with little Fanchon walked to the adjoining hamlet. The condeſcending kindneſs of Clara rendered her preſence always welcome to the poor people; but, unhappy herſelf, ſhe taſted not the joy of others, and ſhe returned again to the caſtle. She ſupped alone with the baron; his behaviour was kind and tender. The next day Bertram re-

turned, and brought word that Lady Maud was gone to her own houſe, and would not again return to the caſtle. The aſtoniſhed Clara aſked when ſhe was to follow. "Never," replied the baron. "I thought, my lord, it was under the ſanction of Lady Maud's reſidence with you that I formed a part of your family, and when ſhe left it, I alſo was to go with her." "I love thee too well, my Clara, to let thee ſubmit to her tyranny. It is true I promiſed this to St. Aubigny, but in the benevolence of the benefactor, perhaps I feel ſomething of the paſſion of the lover. What ſay you to this, Father Bertram?" "Your lordſhip's actions," replied he, "muſt be praiſe-worthy, ſince you have at heart the good of this poor girl, who, as the child of your charity, will

be

be grateful for it." "But that child of charity," ſaid Clara, riſing, "can find an aſylum, where neither vice nor hypocriſy ſhall dare to inſult her." Clara retired to her own room, and wept away the night.

## CHAPTER IV.

WITHOUT coming to any determination how to act, one thing was certain, that ſhe muſt leave the caſtle. The convent of St. Agatha occurred to her; but how could ſhe get there? She reſolved to try to win by every argument in her power the baron's conſent to this ſtep; but would he, who had inſulted her with his love, regard the requeſt? Perhaps he had ſpoken in the gaiety of his heart, and had not ſeriouſly any ill intention. She was ſorry to have ſpoken with ſuch warmth. In the morning ſhe aroſe, and took her uſual walk. On her return ſhe met

met Bertram. "Bleſs you, daughter," he ſaid, "thy virtues have found the way to my heart. I will be thy friend." "Thou my friend!" ſaid ſhe, and left him with a ſmile of contempt. If her heart ſmote her with ingratitude towards the baron, ſhe felt no kind of remorſe for her conduct to Bertram: her diſlike to him was uniform and unvaried. Clara obeyed the ſummons to dinner, and with a faltering voice attempted an apology. The baron prevented her by taking her hand, and leading her to the table.

When the ſervants were gone, the baron ſpoke of Lady Maud, whoſe bad temper made it impoſſible for him to live longer with her; but knowing the delicacy of Clara's mind, he had procured her

her a companion, who had become a lay ſiſter at a convent; had left it to pay the laſt duties to a parent, and was returning to it again; but who had been prevailed on, at leaſt for a time, to become the companion of Clara. She thanked him for the trouble he had taken, which ſhe hinted might have been ſaved by herſelf becoming one of the ſiſterhood. A ſhade of diſcontent paſſing over the face of the baron, ſhe changed the ſubject, and at night retired to her room with more compoſure than ſhe had felt for ſome time; for by chooſing her ſuch a companion, the baron ſhe thought could have no bad deſigns. She prepared therefore with pleaſure for the arrival of Siſter Tereſa: ſhe fancied her young and intereſting, and recollecting the motive that brought her back

back to the world, ſhe ſuppoſed their tempers alike, and thought with pleaſure of the penſive walks they ſhould take together.

At length the day arrived, and Clara haſtened to meet her in the hall. She was neither young, intereſting, nor lovely; and the plain black dreſs of the order did not contribute to remove the awkwardneſs of her tall lean figure. Gloomy devotion, and peeviſh diſcontent, were expreſſed in her large grey eyes. Clara ſhrunk from her, but the baron, pretending not to ſee it, took her hand, and led her to the ſtranger. "Receive," ſaid he, "into your friendſhip the worthy Siſter Tereſa, a bright example of filial duty." The word reached the heart of Clara, and ſhe embraced her, if not with affection, at leaſt

leaſt with reſpect. Diſappointment, and many fears to which ſhe could not give a name, deprived her of reſt; and a few days convinced her Tereſa would neither be the companion of her walks nor her ſtudies; for thoſe ſhe ſeemed to have no taſte: but ſhe had done with this world, and paſſed great part of the day in private devotion. The baron perceived the real ſentiments of Clara, and entreated Tereſa to lay aſide the auſterities of her religion, and enjoy ſome of the pleaſures of life. "For Signora St. Aubigny," ſaid he, "has met with ſorrow, and requires a chearful companion." Tereſa, ſmiling, bowed aſſent; and Clara beheld with aſtoniſhment how ſoon her manners changed to the moſt unreſtrained gaiety: her black dreſs was laid aſide, and her tawdry choice beſpoke

beſpoke the vulgarity of her mind. In the luxuries of the table ſhe indulged herſelf without reſtraint. Clara beheld this transformation with diſguſt. "If," ſaid ſhe, "as it really ſeems, this preſent conduct is natural to her, how hypocritical were her former manners! and if the contrary, how mean thus to degrade herſelf in compliance with the humours of a man ſhe ought to deſpiſe!" but there were times when Tereſa could be leſs diſpleaſing. She beheld the talents of Clara with deference and reſpect, and beſtowed on them the higheſt encomium. Clara's, though a ſenſible, was a vain heart, and glowed at the voice of praiſe. Tereſa alſo ſpoke with warmth on the virtue of gratitude: ſhe had the greateſt reſpect for holy men; and ſhe aſſured Clara,

Bertram,

Bertram was of that number. But her good ſenſe ſoon gained the victory over her vanity, and ſhe then ſaw both hers and Bertram's character in a light that made her ſhudder. Her darkeſt ſurmiſes were ſoon confirmed. It was a fine evening for the ſeaſon, when Clara extended her walk till the moon had riſen. She went to a favourite hermitage which the baron, in a good humour, had fitted up in her own taſte: as ſhe approached it, ſhe heard the ſound of voices; ſhe pauſed, and ſoon diſtinguiſhed thoſe of Bertram and Tereſa. No doubt remained of the nature of the aſſignation: ſhe turned away diſguſted with ſuch conſummate hypocriſy, and determined to live no longer with ſuch deteſtible characters. She haſtened to the baron, and after repeating the diſ-

covery

covery ſhe had made, deſired ſhe might find another companion, or another home; not doubting but, in ſpite of the dark ſhades in his own character, he would hear with abhorrence the vices of thoſe who profeſs themſelves the ſervants of the holy church. What then was her aſtoniſhment to hear their conduct, not merely excuſed, but applauded. "Life," ſaid he, "is deſigned for enjoyment; and he is a fool, my Clara, who daſhes the cup of bliſs from his lips. I do not blame the paſſion of Bertram; but that ſuch an object ſhould excite it!—Her want of charms ſet off to greater advantage thy attractions; and truſt me, my adored Clara—" "Take care, my lord," interrupted Clara, "how you proceed; I have ſtill all the pride and virtue, as yet uncon-

uncontaminated by the vices of your caſtle, where you ſhall no longer dare to detain me." As ſhe went trembling with rage from the baron, ſhe met Tereſa. "What ruffles thy mind, my Clara? Let not human cares diſturb thee, ſeek thy comfort in our holy religion." "I can find comfort in my religion," ſaid Clara, "without requiring the aſſiſtance of a drunken prieſt, or the privacy of an hermitage." She walked on, hardly knowing where ſhe went: at length ſhe heard a voice calling on her in a mournful tone; it was poor Fanchon. "Ah, ſignora," ſaid ſhe, "what is the matter? I was frightened to ſtay by myſelf, ſo I went after you; and I ſaw my lord, and I aſked him where you were: but he did not ſpeak, and I laid hold on his coat; and he daſhed

daſhed me from him. Baptiſt heard me cry, and told me where to find you." "My poor Fanchon," ſaid Clara, "we muſt now ſeek another home." The wind blew, and the rain began to fall; and the moon was loſt in clouds. Fanchon ſcreamed with terror, and begged her to return; which, not knowing where to go, ſhe did, and got to her own room unobſerved. On the morrow, ſhe received no ſummons to breakfaſt, but in the courſe of a few hours had orders to attend the baron in his ſtudy, determined it ſhould be for the laſt time. She went, but on finding only Bertram there, ſhe would have retreated; but he told her, he was there by the order of the baron, and begged to adviſe her as a friend to refuſe

none

none of his requeſts: "every ſin," he added, "committed on the ſcore of gratitude, will be pardoned." Before ſhe could reply, the baron entered, and Bertram retired. He offered her, with a liberal hand, all that wealth could ſupply; but her firmneſs was unſhaken. He then told her, his firſt bringing her to the caſtle, and the manner in which ſhe had been treated, were all preparations to the preſent propoſals; which, if ſhe choſe to accept, ſhe would reign miſtreſs there; if not, ſhe would remain in a ſituation not ſuperior to a domeſtic. To all which ſhe gave her poſitive refuſal, and retired, rejoicing in her independence of mind. She neither wiſhed nor expected to be ſent for to dinner, and none was brought her

to

to her room. In the evening, ſhe grew faint for want of food, and Fanchon cried aloud. She ſent her to the ſervants for ſome, and ſhe ſoon returned weeping, and bringing a little food and ſome wine. "What is the matter, my poor girl?" "O, ſignora, let us leave this fine houſe, and go back to my mother's cottage. Every body is ſo altered!—The ſervants hurried me out of their room, and bid me go and ſtarve with my beggarly miſtreſs." "Inhuman wretches!" cried Clara: "the baron ſhall know this." "He does know it, ſignora; for when Baptiſt threatened to tell him of their behaviour, they ſaid, he ordered them not to wait on you. So Baptiſt gave me his ſupper, and ſaid he could do

without any." Clara forgot her want of food, and her repugnance to ſee the baron, and haſtened to the room where he was ſitting with his friends.

## CHAPTER V.

"I AM come, my lord," ſaid ſhe with ſpirit, "to let you know with what inſolence your ſervants have dared to treat your name;—they have preſumed to ſay your lordſhip could be ſo mean as to vent your reſentment on the little girl under my protection." "My people," anſwered he haughtily, "obey my orders, and ſo ſhall you:—let the brat be ſent back to the ſtrumpet, her mother; ſhe ſhall not again ſleep under my roof: go, and ſee my commands executed;—the poor who are ſupported by the bounty of others, have no right to have dependants." Clara ſaw the meanneſs of this action, and diſdain-

ing a reply, went to ſend away the little comforter of her weary hours. She embraced her, and promiſed ſoon to follow her; but none of the ſervants would go with her: ſhe took her by the hand, and walked on the ramparts, in hopes of ſeeing ſome of the peaſantry, who would take charge of her; but night was coming on, and nobody appeared. Baptiſt paſſed her, ſhe thanked him for his late civility, and told him her preſent diſtreſs, which he immediately relieved by offering himſelf to take the child. She committed her to his care, and retired to her ſolitary chamber; and muſed on her alarming ſituation. She had now not even St. Aubigny left; nobody remained but poor Diego, and him ſhe reſolved to ſend for, and ſet out once more for the convent

convent of St. Agatha. She knew in reality the baron had no right to detain her, and ſhe determined in the morning to write to him her intentions: but what name could ſhe uſe? to that of St. Aubigny ſhe had no right, and that of Montalt ſhe dared not aſſume.

In the morning ſhe walked to a little farm-houſe, the miſtreſs of which had always been civil to her, and there ſhe took her breakfaſt of brown bread and milk; for nobody at the caſtle ſeemed to think of ſending her food. When ſhe returned, ſhe paſſed through the hall: the door of a room was open, and there ſat the baron and his two friends at breakfaſt. She pauſed, and the words ſhe attempted to ſpeak, died on her lips. The

air of the morning had given to her pale cheeks ſome of their wonted bloom, and her deep mourning dreſs rendered her appearance intereſting and lovely. The baron ſurveyed her with a look of delight; but all the reſentment of his ſoul ſhone in his face, when in a firm voice ſhe told him her fixed determination to leave the houſe. "Do it at your peril," ſaid he: "but for once I will condeſcend to ſhew you my right to prevent you. An hour hence be in the ſtudy, and it will be explained to you:—and this night you will reſign your apartment to Tereſa; they are not proper for one who holds in ſuch contempt the elegances of life. Go, I have nothing farther to ſay to the baſtard dependant of a pariſh-prieſt." Clara would have replied, but her

her indignation was too great for utterance. She ſupported herſelf againſt the wall, and burſt into tears: Baptiſt was coming by with his muſket in his hand, which he immediately put down, and reſpectfully deſired that he might lead her to her room. "Fellow," ſaid the baron ſternly, "who art thou?" "I am the ſervant, not the ſlave, of the Baron de Clifford," replied he. "Thou art his ſuperior," ſaid Clara, "if thou haſt either juſtice, virtue, or humanity." Aſtoniſhed at the freedom of her ſpeech, the baron loſt all power to reply, and ſuffered her to depart with her humble companion. "I wiſh I could farther ſerve you, lady," ſaid Baptiſt; "but the baron is my maſter, and it is my duty to be faithful." "Thy fidelity deſerves a better employer," ſaid

Clara; "but I will not to try to corrupt it." As ſoon as the perturbation of her ſpirits had ſubſided, ſhe went to Bertram, who launched out in the moſt bitter invectives at her behaviour that morning. Clara, with a conſcious pride, that diſdained to bend to this mean tool of the baron's, deſired he would proceed to the ſubject that brought her there, and inform her by what right the baron detained her. "By that right," he ſaid, "which the great always have over the liberty of their vaſſals. My lord alſo received from your friend St. Aubigny the power of commanding your actions." "Impoſſible!" ſaid Clara, as ſhe took the offered paper, in which, to her ſurpriſe and confuſion, ſhe found St. Aubigny had appointed the good Lord de Clifford, as he termed

termed him, her guardian, till the age of twenty-five; and to have the power of preventing her retiring to a convent. "Dear, venerable, miſtaken old man," exclaimed Clara, "thou little knoweſt the conſequence of thy too eaſy faith: little didſt thou know this ſycophant, this infamous lord, who inſults thy aſhes, laughs at thy credulity, and perſecutes thy poor defenceleſs Clara." She then deſired ſhe might be ſhewn to her new apartments, and that her food might be ſent her. He told her ſhe might occupy thoſe ſhe had till the evening, as ſhe muſt wait on the baron. A woman-ſervant, whoſe ſurly manners ſhe had often remarked, brought her dinner, and in the evening told her Bertram waited to take her to her new apartment. Clara fol-

lowed him along a gallery that ran through the habitable part of the caſtle; they deſcended into a large damp hall, and then aſcended another flight of ſtairs: ſhe ſhuddered when ſhe ſaw it led towards the north wing, and ſhe thought Bertram turned round, and looked at her pale face with a malicious pleaſure. They paſſed through a long room, where the duſk of the evening threw a gloom over the full-length pictures that hung againſt the wall. A warrior of a noble countenance drew her attention, and by it hung a complete ſuit of armour. She paufed a moment to look at it. "It is," ſaid Bertram, "the armour and the portrait of the Lord Montalt: it was hung here at the requeſt of the Lady de Clifford." Clara regarded with an awful ſenſation this reſemblance

ſemblance of an unfortunate parent; but was hurried on by Bertram, who opened a door into a long and narrow paſſage, at the end of which was her apartment. It was cold and dreary: the painted windows were nearly covered with ivy; much of the glaſs was broken; the high-backed chairs, and the bed, were of rich, but tattered velvet; a portrait of a woman hung by the bed-ſide; before it ſtood a velvet ſtool, which ſeemed to have been much worn. "Am I," ſaid Clara, "to be left alone in this diſmal place?" "Certainly," replied Bertram; "who will ſtay with you? not a ſervant in the family to poſſeſs the baron's riches would ſleep in the north wing." "In the north wing! O ſpeak to the baron to take me from this dreadful place."

" Ah," ſaid he, with a ſneer, " can ſuch a heroine fear to meet the midnight ſpectre?" " I deſerve this inſult," ſaid Clara, " for my childiſh fears: from the living I have much to dread; from the dead, nothing."

It was a momentary courage; for when ſhe looked round her apartment, made ſtill more diſmal by the approaching ſhades of night, her heart ſunk within her. The ominous ſhrieks of the owls, the diſguſting ſight of the bats that hung in cluſters on the curtains, long their reſting-place, filled her with horror. At length the ſame ſervant who had brought her dinner entered with her ſupper and a lamp. " So," ſaid ſhe, " our maſter is at length come to his right ſenſes. Holy

St.

St. Peter! what a fuſs here was about fine rooms and fine things, for a charity girl!—and then my lord to bring back his old caſt-off miſtreſs, and make her put on ſuch ſanctified looks! but Tereſa could not refrain from her old tricks, and ſo you found her out: but you can watch her no more, my girl; for to the north wing you are to be confined." Clara commanded her to quit the room, and when left to herſelf, gave way to an agony of grief, at her deſerted ſituation; and a murmur aroſe in her mind, that all her friends ſhould reſt in peace, and herſelf alone be expoſed to every inſult. Again ſhe thought of the myſterious inhabitant of the north wing: perhaps the ghaſtly figure ſhe had ſeen was now near her. Th wind, blowing through the broken wir

dow

dows, nearly extinguiſhed her lamp: dreading to be left without a light, ſhe ſtarted up, and placing it in the chimney, ſhe threw herſelf on the bed. In the pauſes of the wind, ſhe fancied ſhe heard a groan near her; the ſtorm ceaſed, and the moon aroſe in all its brightneſs.—Again ſhe heard a deep ſigh, and haſtily turning her head, ſaw a woman, with a veil half thrown back, kneeling before the portrait. She ſlowly aroſe, and walked round the bed, without ſeeming to know any-body was there. She lifted up the tapeſtry, and opening a private door diſappeared.

## CHAPTER VI.

AT that inſtant Clara caught a view of her face, and ſaw with unſpeakable horror the pale ſpectre that had before ſo terrified her. She had ſtrength enough to ſnatch up the lamp in a great hurry, and immediately ran out of the room, the door of which was not locked, and haſtened along the gallery; but that door was locked, and the key was gone. Struck with horror at this diſcovery, ſhe threw her eyes round in deſpair, and perceived another door; it was not faſtened; and after hurrying through ſeveral rooms, ſhe found herſelf in the old armoury, where

where hardly a window remained. She ſhuddered as ſhe looked around, and fancied the grim viſages of the old warriors ſtill frowned from their ruſty armour. A guſt of wind aroſe; the tattered banners and the plumed helmets waved in the blaſt, and at the ſame moment extinguiſhed her lamp. A kind of ſupernatural courage ſupported her, and ſhe at length found the door. The ſound of a diſtant ſtep met her ear, and a light flaſhed on the walls. Terrified at the idea of again meeting the ſpectre, ſhe threw herſelf behind ſome old tapeſtry that had fallen, and which the ſudden light had ſhewn:—but it was Bertram who paſſed with a lamp, and before ſhe could recover from her ſurpriſe, and call to him, he again diſappeared. She wandered for ſome time

time in deſpair, and at laſt ſaw a light ſhine through the crevices of a door; ſhe opened it, not ſcrupling at ſuch a time to implore even the protection of Bertram: but he was gone: on the table ſtood the lamp, whoſe light had attracted her; it threw a faint gleam round the room, which Clara fancied ſhe had ſeen before. She took up the light to examine it, and walked ſlowly round it: at the farther end, a figure lay extended on a couch; the black covering which concealed the head and face, left her in doubt whether it was that of a living perſon or not. She half raiſed her hand to lift up the covering, when it was inſtantly thrown off, and the ſpectre again met her view. Starting up, and throwing its arms around her, it exclaimed, "Spirit of

my

my departed lady, take, O take me with thee !"

Clara was again left in darkneſs, for in her fright ſhe had let the lamp fall; and haſtily diſengaging herſelf, ſhe ran round the room. At firſt ſhe ſeemed purſued, ſomething fell, a deep groan ſucceeded, and all again was ſtill as death; a friendly gleam of the moon diſcovered the door to her, which ſhe opened, and ran along the corridor. On a ſudden her flight was ſuſpended by a heap of rubbiſh; ſhe pauſed to conſider what to do, when the looſe ſtones on which ſhe ſtood gave way, and ſhe fell to a conſiderable depth. Stunned by the violence of the fall, ſhe lay for ſome time inſenſible, and was at length rouſed by ſomething cold

as

as death touching her arm; and the ſmall light that now appeared ſhewed her it was a large ſnake, that had entwined itſelf around her. She tore it from her in a fit of phrenſy, and ruſhing acroſs the vault, daſhed her head againſt a low iron grate, and the blood followed, which relieved her, and enabled her in ſome degree to collect her ſcattered thoughts. As ſhe graſped the iron bars, the air of the morning blew freſh on her exhauſted frame: ſhe ſaw, by the mouldering coffins and ſcattered bones, that ſhe was in the gloomy manſions of the dead, where many a noiſome reptile lived undiſturbed. She had heard that this vault led to others, below the ruined chapel, where ſhe was certain of eſcaping. She reached it in ſafety; and as ſhe forced her way through

through the weeds and ivy that ſtopped up the entrance, the birds of night, ſcared at the interruption of their lonely reign, flew out in large numbers, and ſcreamed round her head. With feeble ſteps ſhe reached a grove at ſome diſtance, where, regardleſs of the rain that now began to fall, ſhe threw herſelf on the ground, and laid for ſome time with a confuſed recollection of the paſt. The voice of a hunter on the hill made her look up; the ſcene was familiar to her, and ſhe ſaw the path that led to St. Maurice.

After pouring her oriſons to Heaven for having protected her through the perils of the night, ſhe proceeded on her way to Margaret's cottage. But already

was

was its look of comfort gone: the pales that ſurrounded the little garden were broken, and the ſhrubs that ſhe had planted there threw their neglected branches acroſs the little path that led to the cottage; the broken windows were rudely mended with paper, and beſpoke the poverty that was within. She opened the door, and a ſcream from Margaret proclaimed her ſurpriſe and joy at the ſight of Clara. She preſſed the hand of her poor, but honeſt friend, and dropt a tear as ſhe looked on her meagre countenance, once glowing with health and comfort. She found her with her ragged children hovering over a little fire; ſome weakly diluted tea, and a ſmall pittance of coarſe bread, were on the table before her: a little boy that was lying on the ground looked up,

up, and welcomed her with a ſmile of tranſport, though the tears ſtill hung on his cheek; and little Franchon laid her arms on her lap, and aſked her if ſhe was not come to fetch her back again to the caſtle, and if ſhe had not brought them ſome nice things in her pocket. "My poor Fanchon," ſaid Clara, "I have no longer nice things to give, but am come to ſhare thy mother's poverty." "And welcome ſhall you be to me, my dear lady, as long as my poor hands can work for you; and that God who ſent you to ſuccour my orphans and their dying father, will give the means to ſhow our gratitude. I am ſorry, ſignora," continued the honeſt creature, "that the baker forgot to call yeſterday; but I will go to our neighbours, who can refuſe nothing to their

their benefactreſs." And before Clara could prevent her, ſhe was gone. "My poor mother forgets," ſaid Fanchon," that the baker did come yeſterday, and becauſe we had no money would leave us no more bread." Margaret returned delighted, with ſome better bread, a little butter, and a ſmall baſket of fruit: ſhe wiped her table, took down her beſt teapot, and put her laſt handful of wood on the fire; when placing the little meal before Clara, ſhe refuſed to partake of it, proteſting herſelf and children had had a very good breakfaſt: but their frequent whiſperings to their mother, who in vain tried to quiet them, and their half-ſuppreſſed murmurs, convinced her of their ſtarving condition; and, telling Margaret her heart was too full to eat, ſhe divided

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the food among the children; and the rain having ſubſided, walked out among the cottages.

## CHAPTER VII.

CLARA ſaw with concern the alteration which a few weeks had made. The perſon who ſupplied the place of St. Aubigny was in every reſpect his oppoſite: no kind paſtor now ſpoke comfort to the dying peaſant, no generous hand ſupplied the wants of poverty and ſickneſs; the ſmall lot of ground that each poſſeſſed belonged to the baron, who, at the entreaties of St. Aubigny, had been induced to let them have it at an eaſy rent; but it was now raiſed, and the pooreſt and oldeſt turned out; and the land was let

in larger lots, and theſe occupied by creatures of the baron.

Clara now felt how much the manners of the poor depend on the conduct of their ſuperiors: ſhe returned with an aching heart to Margaret, and found her weeping. "I am grieved, ſignora," ſaid ſhe, "to think I cannot better entertain you; ſickneſs has made me weak, and I fear I cannot walk to the town to buy you a dinner." "Ah why, Margaret," ſaid Clara, "thus attempt to conceal thy poverty from me? thy looks, and theſe poor children, beſpeak the fatal truth. Let us then, by mutual confidence, try to mend our wretched ſituation." Clara then informed her of the pennyleſs ſtate in which ſhe had left the caſtle, and her motive for quitting

quitting it. Margaret, whoſe honeſt heart neither poverty nor a narrow education had been able to corrupt, applauded her for it; and then, with a loquacity the more violent for having been ſuppreſſed, ſpoke of the diſmal changes of the village, and of the diſtreſs ſhe had ſuffered from the baron's having ceaſed to pay her the little weekly ſum allotted her by St. Aubigny. Sleep, the ſweet ſoother of thoſe who are too young for laſting ſorrow, ſoon lulled the children into a forgetfulneſs of their hunger; and Clara, attended by Margaret, went to her favourite paddock, behind which was lately the houſe of St. Aubigny. The moon-beams fell on the graſs, which, grown long and rank, waved in the breeze. She tried in vain to reach the ruſtic ſeat, now overgrown with nettles.

" Alas!" ſaid Clara, " how often at ſuch an hour have I ſat here, with my dear father St. Aubigny, my poor Henry, my Eleanor, and my beloved Albert!—they are all at reſt, and I alone remain a ſolitary outcaſt!" Margaret ſaw her ſorrow, and endeavoured to lead her away. " Alas!" ſaid ſhe, " my diſtreſs is for the dead; and the voice of my grief ariſes for thoſe that are paſſed away, and can return no more." Her tears relieved her aching heart, and ſhe returned to the cottage with a determination to act with more fortitude for the future.

The firſt thing to be conſidered was, how to procure preſent food. Clara had a few trinkets that had been given her by the baron, which were now fortunately

in

in her poſſeſſion. She ſent them to the next town to be ſold; and the comfortable meal to which they ſat down the next day, cheered and revived them all. And it was agreed, that as ſoon as Margaret had recovered a little ſtrength, ſhe ſhould leave the care of the children to Clara, and go to the monaſtery of St. Benedict, and implore the advice of Father Jerome; and in a few days ſhe felt ſo cheered by the preſence of Clara, and the hope of aſſiſtance, that ſhe was impatient to be gone.

Clara was at length prevailed on to let her ſet out in the evening to go to Diego's ſiſter, who lived at the diſtance of half a league, and requeſt her to go on with her the next day to the monaſtery. Margaret

ſet out with alacrity: it was a fine evening, and had already all the heat of ſummer; but the ſky ſoon became overcaſt, and the thunder was heard at a diſtance. She withdrew from the caſement, and tried to amuſe herſelf with the children; but as the night grew worſe, they ſcreamed with terror, crying their poor mother would be killed; and entreating they might fetch her back. Clara, hardly knowing what ſhe did, took the children, and purſued the path which Margaret had taken, vainly hoping ſhe would turn back, and that they ſhould meet her: but the ſky became ſo dreadfully dark, that when they entered the foreſt, it ſeemed already midnight. Clara remembered this was the laſt fatal walk ſhe had taken with Eleanor: ſhe had now nearly reached

reached the bridge, and her heart almoſt died within her. She was unable to anſwer the queſtions of Fanchon, or ſooth the other children. She was juſt emerging from the foreſt, when ſomething lay acroſs the path, and ſhe fell over it; the ſhrieks of the children, the roaring of the thunder, re-echoed by the rocks, only juſt left her ſenſe enough to perceive by the flaſhes of lightening, that it was poor Margaret, ſtruck down by the ſtorms. "My dear Fanchon," ſaid Clara, "it is your mother; and could you run on to the hunter's hut, we might gain aſſiſtance." Poor Fanchon, whoſe little heart forgot its fears when ſerving thoſe ſhe loved, went, and ſoon returned with two men, who carried the poor woman back to her cottage, placed her on the bed, and re-

tired without offering farther affiſtance. Clara, affrighted at their ſavage looks, was not ſorry to ſee them depart; and leaving Fanchon to take care of her brothers, tried to recover their mother:—but the hand of death was upon her, ſhe juſt opened her eyes, looked wildly at Clara and the children, and with a ſhriek expired.

## CHAPTER VIII.

CLARA, transfixed with horror at this dreadful event, was unable to move from her place; and the children, not knowing the fate of their mother, and wearied by their exertions, fell aſleep. The thunder ſtill awfully roared at a diſtance, and the lightning continued to dart through the broken caſement, and play round the ghaſtly countenance of the corpſe.

Clara almoſt wiſhed that ſome ſupernatural power would interfere, and deprive herſelf and the miſerable children

of exiſtence. She fancied her wiſh was granted, and that the ghoſts of her departed friends ſurrounded her to carry her to the ſhades of death:—a noiſe of a different kind now met her ear, and ſhe heard herſelf called by her name. A heavy ſtep aſcended the ſtairs, the door burſt open, and a man entered in a ſoldier's dreſs; he darted forwards to prevent her from ſinking, and ſhe perceived it to be the faithful Baptiſt. She informed him of the dreadful accident that had happened, and they quitted the chamber of death, and deſcended to the room below. He gave her an account of all that had happened at the caſtle ſince her departure, and of the ſurpriſe occaſioned by her ſudden diſappearance, in the following words:

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The baron at firſt ordered his people to purſue her, then again recalled them, and commanded that no reſtraint ſhould be laid on her inclinations. He became thoughtful and gloomy; and one evening riding out alone, and taking the road towards St. Maurice, Baptiſt attending him, his horſe ſtarted and threw him; he fell with his head againſt a rock, and was taken home apparently dead. But though he had now regained the uſe of his ſpeech and ſenſes, he was not expected to live a week. As ſoon as his approaching end was announced, Bertram and Tereſa had fled: "and ſuch has been his behaviour, ſignora, that there is hardly a ſervant that will go near him, except myſelf. It truly is mournful to hear how he bewails his paſt life, which I fear has

been bad enough: but moſt of all, he wiſhes to ſee you; and then he thinks he might die in peace."

Clara's tender heart could not bear the idea of refuſing to adminiſter to the comfort of a dying penitent, yet ſhuddered at the thoughts of again entering the caſtle: but her own humanity, and the entreaties of Baptiſt, prevailed. But as ſhe was then unequal to the walk, and as the baron was likely to live ſome days, ſhe would endeavour to compoſe her ſpirits, and viſit him in the evening. Baptiſt promiſed to ſee the children taken care of; and ſwore, by the faith of a ſoldier and a man, to guard Clara with his life.

The day made its appearance before his

his departure. Clara, ſummoning all her fortitude, delivered the children to the care of a neighbour, and gave directions about the funeral of their poor mother, and ſet out once more for the caſtle, which ſhe reached as the evening cloſed. Entering at a back gate, ſhe paſſed by the common breakfaſt-room, in which ſhe perceived a light, and was confounded at the indecent tumult ſhe heard; but ſhe no ſooner diſtinguiſhed the voice of Count Roderigo and his companions, than the dreadful truth that ſhe had been betrayed by Baptiſt ſtruck her forcibly; and ſhe was turning round to make her eſcape, when ſhe met him. "Deceitful wretch!" exclaimed Clara. "Not ſo loud, ſignora, or Count Roderigo will hear you." "Holy Virgin! they are coming this way!"

way!" She ſuffered herſelf to be dragged by him, rather than led, into a diſtant room, when he convinced her his honeſty was unſhaken. He informed her that Roderigo, having heard of his father's ſtate, had that day come to the caſtle with his aſſociates, determining to remain there till that hour ſhould arrive when he would be proclaimed its maſter. Clara, at this information, would have fled, but was prevented by the arguments of Baptiſt: he affirmed ſhe would be ſafe from Count Roderigo, as he never went near that part where his father lies, and that the few ſervants who attended the baron dreaded and avoided the ſon; and that he had the means of conveying her from thence the moment his maſter breathed his laſt.

Clara

Clara ſuffered herſelf to be conducted to the apartment of the baron, who received her with all the gratitude and humility of a ſincere penitent. She remembered only his kindneſs to her, and wept to ſee him inſulted and deſerted in his laſt moments. She ſpent ſome hours with him, and then retired to reſt her exhauſted ſpirits: ſhe felt herſelf ſtill more relieved from her fear of Roderigo, as he had been told by Baptiſt that ſhe had died at Margaret's cottage. She paſſed ſeveral days in the moſt unremitting care and attention to the baron; and in this office of humanity ſhe was aſſiſted by a pious father of a neighbouring convent, who ſaw the baron muſt be ſoothed, rather than frightened, into his duty. In conſequence of this mild treatment, the fever

on

on his ſpirits ſubſided, and he even exhibited ſome ſigns of recovery. Clara rejoiced at the proſpect, for ſhe ſaw the good effect this illneſs had had on his temper: he even wept at the fate of Margaret, and ordered a liberal proviſion for her poor orphans. Nothing now ſeemed to irritate him, except the conduct of his unnatural ſon, who was at this time abſent with his companions: and Clara, knowing they would not return till night, had ventured out to breathe a little air; but as ſhe returned through the hall ſhe heard the ſound of their voices. The darkneſs concealed her, and ſhe pauſed, afraid to go on. "Comrade," ſaid one of the men to Count Roderigo, in a familar tone, "times are altered at this caſtle, ſince the old prieſt and his young crew, and ſurly Ricardo,

cardo, governed." "Let the dead reſt in peace," ſaid one, who by the deepneſs of his voice ſhe knew to be Rodolpho. "And Signora Clara," ſaid another, "is now gone to the ſhades to bear them company." "Is ſhe dead?" ſaid Rodolpho; "and is ſhe in our catalogue?" "No," ſaid Roderigo. "I am glad to hear it," rejoined he; "for I liked her proud ſpirit, though it plagued me; and I am glad ſhe is not in our catalogue; it is full enough." "It wants one more," ſaid Count Roderigo." "And—" whiſpered Rodolpho. The other man, who ſeemed intoxicated, ſtarted up, and ſwore "there ſhould be no ſecrets in the ſociety." In his haſte he threw down the light, and enabled Clara to ſteal unſeen to the baron's room. A compoſing draught had

been given him, which was expected to have great effect; and Clara was determined to ſit up with him. Alone, and in the ſtillneſs of the night, ſhe ruminated on the converſation ſhe had heard, till ſhe feared the murderers might enter the chamber. To divert her mind from theſe ideas, ſhe put aſide the curtain, and looked from the window on the moonlight ſcene below: all was ſtill, except the wind that gently murmured among the trees. The clock ſtruck one; it ſeemed like the knell of death: ſhe heard a light ſtep in the room; ſhe gently put aſide the curtain that concealed her, and beheld Roderigo.

## CHAPTER IX.

HE ſeemed juſt riſen from his bed: his gown hung looſe about him; a white handkerchief bound his forehead; his ſtaring eyes ſeemed fixed; and his counnance, always ſallow, aſſumed a livid hue. In one hand he carried a lamp; with the other he tremblingly drew a dagger from his boſom. Clara ſaw his murderous deſign; and recollecting he thought her dead, ſhe ſtole from her place, and followed him unſeen. Nature at that moment ſeemed to prevail, and render uſeleſs the dagger that trembled in the hand of the feeble aſ-

ſaſſin.

faſſin. The baron moved in his ſleep; again the hand was raiſed. Clara ſnatched it back with all her ſtrength: he turned round; the lamp threw a faint gleam on her pale face; the dagger dropped from his hand; he groaned, and fell to the ground. Clara had deſired Baptiſt to throw himſelf on a bed in the adjoining room: ſhe haſtened to him; he returned with her to the place where the wretch ſtill lay ſenſeleſs; he took up the dagger, and looked wiſtfully at Clara, but ſhe ſnatched it from him. Baptiſt, who was very ſtrong, threw him acroſs his ſhoulders, and conveyed him from the room. Clara, taking the light, led the way, and as they were deſcending the ſtairs, ſhe ſaw a man ſtanding at the bottom, who ſhe knew to be Rodolpho.

" I fear not a phantom!" ſaid he, but ſtarted at the ſight of her. " Nor I an aſſaſſin," ſaid Clara; " therefore do thy worſt"—preſenting herſelf for the blow. " Revenge," ſaid he, " has often nerved my arm; but malice never. Thou haſt not wronged me: my dagger is not ſtained with the blood of the innocent; a woman's would diſgrace it. Retire in peace." " I reſpect thy valour," replied Clara: " though I deteſt thy principles, I honour thy fidelity. Though thy maſter is baſe, no hand has been raiſed againſt him:—take him hence. The baron's vaſſals feel their returning duty; they crowd his chamber: juſtice purſues thee; fly, and may Heaven forgive thee, haughty and brave Rodolpho." Clara again aſcended the ſtairs, followed by Baptiſt: he

he was aſtoniſhed at that ſpirit which, though often ſunk by ſorrow, could in real danger riſe ſuperior to every fear. Some of the ſervants, who had ariſen at the noiſe, remained faithful to the baron; the reſt were ſummoned: ſhe told them that Count Roderigo and his people had fled, and commanding them to return to their duty, promiſed a total oblivion of the paſt. Confounded at the ſudden tumult, they followed to the apartment of the baron, whom ſhe had juſt time to prepare; and pardon being granted, they all retired. Roderigo and his people, really believing themſelves purſued, had left the caſtle early in the morning. Clara, by the aſſiſtance of the holy father, regulated the houſehold, and again eſtabliſhed domeſtic order and regularity. The baron, appriſed

of

of all that had paſſed, thanked her with tears of gratitude, as the preſerver of his life; and wondered at the aſtoniſhing preſence of mind which ſhe had diſplayed. Peace, or at leaſt tranquillity, reigned in the boſom of Clara: ſhe looked not for happineſs: all hope was buried with the companions of her childhood. The guilty paſſion of the baron had fled from his boſom, and gratitude and parental regard reigned in its ſtead. She tried every art to amuſe him; and in compliance with his wiſhes, laid aſide her ſable dreſs. But the fear of death now paſt, the violence of his temper would ſhew itſelf in fits of anger to his ſervants; but to Clara he was always tender and affectionate. One evening ſhe had returned from a viſit to the children of

Margaret,

Margaret, when, on entering the room where the baron ſat, ſhe perceived a man with him; the duſkineſs prevented her from ſeeing who it was; but her heart thrilled with horror, when the baron, riſing, took her hand, and ſaid, "Father Bertram is returned; I have long been accuſtomed to his ſociety, and need in my preſent weak ſtate the aſſiſtance of an old friend; and I know the generous heart of my Clara will extend its forgiveneſs to all, who once, through ignorance of her virtues, gave her offence." She ſhrunk from the offered hand of Bertram, and quitting the room, burſt into tears. She knew this conduct would inflame the irritable temper of the baron, and ſhe had not now even the cottage of Margaret to ſhelter her; but her health was

faſt

faſt declining, and ſhe looked forward to the hour, which ſhe felt was not far diſtant, when her worldly troubles ſhould end, and ſhe ſhould again join her beloved friends. In the mean time, ſhe ſaw the neceſſity of concealing her diſlike to Bertram: he read her real ſentiments, hated her for them, and determined again to ruin her with his lord; who, reſenting her diſobedience to his wiſhes, treated her with ſome degree of harſhneſs, which Bertram took every opportunity to aggravate. Clara was now almoſt always in her own room, where her lute and her books in ſome ſmall degree eaſed her mind; and when the moon aroſe, ſhe would walk on the ramparts, and, liſtening to the murmurs of the wind, would often fancy ſhe heard the voice of St. Aubigny, bidding her be

firm in virtue. It was in one of theſe rambles that the ſoft tones of the harp met her ear; it was ſtruck by no common hand: approaching the place from whence the ſound proceeded, ſhe looked down, and ſaw a group of peaſants and ſome ſervants, ſurrounding the harper. He was a wanderer from a diſtant country, he ſaid; he was too weak to labour, and had no other means to procure his bread. He again began to play, and accompanied it with his voice in ſuch a tone of mingled ſweetneſs and melancholy, that it reached in a moment the tender heart of Clara. He ſung of the ſimple joys of childhood, of the ſociety of thoſe we love, and concluded with a ſolemn ſtrain to the memory of thoſe that are no more. It was too much

for

for Clara; ſhe retired in agony, and ſleep fled her pillow. A ſtrange idea obtruded into her mind, that her fate was by ſome means connected with this harper. In the morning, ſhe found that Baptiſt had prevailed on the other ſervants to let him remain concealed in the caſtle. Clara was reſolved to ſee him again; it was too dark for her the night before to obſerve him. Her youthful fancy had already dreſſed him in the charms of beauty, and of winning manners; ſhe ſaw him, and the viſion fled. His face was pale and thin, and ſhaded by a quantity of lank hair, which hung in rude diſorder; one eye was covered with a large patch; he ſaid, he had loſt it in his infancy: his manners were coarſe; and his laconic anſwers teſtified his impatience at the queſtions

aſked him. Clara ſaw with diſappointment and vexation that there was nothing in the ſtranger that anſwered the favourable picture ſhe had drawn; but his muſic was powerful, and the paſſions ſeemed at his command. She was aſtoniſhed to ſee with what reſpect, nay, almoſt adoration, he was regarded by Baptiſt, who certainly had no taſte for harmony; but whoſe nature, ſince the arrival of the ſtranger, ſeemed totally changed. He was all wildneſs and agitation, and entreated Clara that the harper might play before the baron.— "Alas!" ſaid ſhe, "on a mind like his, muſic can have no power: let the young man return in ſafety: for if known to be here, he might incur the anger of the baron." "Lady," ſaid the ſtranger, "my

ſoul

ſoul ſhrinks not in the preſence of the great; and of all men I leaſt fear, is the Baron de Clifford." As he ſpoke, his limbs ſhook with paſſion, and a glow of indignation ruſhed to his face. Clara left them, promiſing to ſpeak to the baron.

## CHAPTER X.

CLARA met the baron at dinner; his air was reſerved and mournful: ſhe ſpoke of the wonderful harper. The baronet's curioſity was raiſed, and he ordered him into his preſence; and, ſtarting at his uncouth appearance, bade him begin. He complied, and ſeemed as if he had the power of operating on the paſſions of all preſent: a mixture of terror, doubt, and ſurpriſe, marked the face of the baron, which was partly ſhaded by his hand. Bertram fixed his eyes on the ſtranger

with

with a ghaſtly kind of ſtare: Baptiſt, who, with a few more of the attendants, remained in the room, regarded with equal earneſtneſs the baron, whoſe every feature expreſſed a terrific kind of emotion. The mournful ſtrain had ceaſed:—a ſigh eſcaped the baron. Clara waved her hand to the harper to proceed: he touched the ſtrings with a trembling hand, and ſung as follows:

Hark, from yon woodbine-ſcented glade,
What thrilling ſounds the ear invade!
'Twas Pity gave thoſe ſoften'd tones;
An orphan ſcarce diſtinguiſh'd moans:
They vainly reach the tyrant ſoul,
Where all the darker paſſions roll;
With beauty's woes he feaſts his cruel eyes,
And drinks with eager joy her mournful ſighs.

But ſaw'ſt thou not that hoary head,
Where Age his wintry ſnows had ſpread?
Did'ſt thou not mark his cloſing eye—
Did'ſt thou not hear his parting ſigh,

When he to thee, to thee reſign'd
The beſt and faireſt of her kind?
See her with quiv'ring lips complain:
Inſatiate wretch! to thee ſhe pleads in vain.
But when the day her journey cloſes,
And virtue on her couch repoſes,
Memory then, with lightſome wing,
The pleaſures of the paſt ſhall bring;
Paint in rapture's glowing lays
The pictur'd ſcenes of childhood's days:—
Her ſorrows huſh'd, her ſenſes ſteep'd in reſt,
While Love ideal claſps her to his breaſt.

The infant, waking from its ſleep,
Starts at the whirlwind's burſting ſweep;
Then ſmiles to find his fears are vain,
Down lays his little head again.
Short as his ſhall be thy ſorrow;
The fears of what may come to-morrow,
No more with care thy bleeding heart ſhall rend,
For Heaven itſelf ſhall be the orphan's friend.

Hear, O tyrant! hear, and tremble:
None for thee ſhall joys diſſemble.—
Ah, fear'ſt thou not the curtain'd night?
What griſly phantoms blaſt thy ſight!
The crouding ſpectres ſtop thy breath:
Thou feel'ſt the marble hand of Death.

Thus

Thus guilt a hell perpetual forms around;—
A falling beetle, ſeems a cannon ſound.

Oh, bear thee to the roaring flood!
Ah, view again the ſtream of blood!
And mark, when high the billows riſe,
That pallid form—heard'ſt thou his cries?
They reach thy heart; for he is one
Whom Nature gave thee for a ſon.
Loud the ſtorm———————

"Stop," ſaid the baron, riſing from his ſeat, and his eyes darting fire—"ſtop, and tell me who thou art?" "Thy ſon," ſaid the youth, ſtepping forward; and throwing off his diſguiſe, diſcovered the long-loſt Albert. "It is, it is our young maſter! Welcome—Welcome!" vociferated the attendants. "Seize the impoſtor!" ſaid the baron. Clara ruſhed forwards to the arms of her beloved Albert; but her ſtrength was inſufficient, and overpower-

ed by ſurpriſe and terror, ſhe ſunk on the floor. The ſervants, intimidated by the threats of the baron, ſeized the defenceleſs Albert, and carried him to a dungeon. Baptiſt had the prudence not to attempt a reſcue, which he knew would be uſeleſs; and by ſeeming to have no concern in it, he might be able to aſſiſt his young maſter, who had from the firſt diſcovered himſelf to him. Clara, when ſhe awoke from her temporary death, found ſhe had been conveyed to her old priſon. In a few minutes the tapeſtry was lifted up, and the private door opened. "Be not alarmed," ſaid a voice in a low tone; "but when all are at reſt, paſs through this door, and find your way to the north rampart, where—" At this inſtant,

inſtant, a noiſe was heard at the other door, and the tapeſtry dropped. Bertram entered, and after pouring his denunciations on her, he told her the ſtranger had been examined, and had confeſſed himſelf an impoſtor; but that ſhe muſt remain a priſoner till ſhe could clear herſelf from the ſuſpicion of having forwarded the cheat; and even then, to return to the baron's favour, ſhe muſt ſubmit unconditionally to all his terms.

Clara deſired him to withdraw, and remove from her ſight one whoſe principles ſhe deteſted, and whoſe menaces ſhe deſpiſed; "and tell your noble employer," ſaid ſhe, "I admire that preſence of mind which could again ſend me back to my priſon, from which I eſcaped to

ſave his life: tell him he may have terrors for the guilty, but not for the innocent." "And to the protection of thy innocence, I leave thee," ſaid Bertram; "but will take care how thou eſcapeſt me now."

He locked the door, and left her to the darkneſs of the night. The hours rolled away, and no light was brought her: the family ſhe knew were at reſt: ſhe could look only for aſſiſtance from her unknown friend, who, ſhe hoped, would again appear with a light; an expectation which was not without its terrors, as ſhe remembered the horrors of the place, and trembled to encounter them. But were they not all to be braved? when ſhe was again to meet her

her Albert, whom ſhe had long mourned as dead.

Again the clock ſtruck, and determining, though without a light, to explore her way, and truſt her fate to Heaven, whoſe protection ſhe moſt earneſtly implored, ſhe aroſe with renewed courage. She lifted up the tapeſtry, opened the door, and paſſed through a ſuit of rooms lighted only by the faint gleams of the moon. She reached one of larger extent, with the ſhutters cloſed: ſhe rejoiced to ſee a lamp, which ſhe doubted not had been left there to forward her eſcape. It was placed over the chimney ſo high, that ſhe was obliged to get up in one of the chairs to reach it. As ſhe jumped down, the echos of her feet

ran

ran round the room. A laugh, which ſeemed like that of an infernal being, and the horrid rattling of chains, ſtruck on her ear.—

## CHAPTER XI.

WHEN ſhe turned round, and once more beheld the ghaſtly ſpectre clothed in black; it toſſed its arms, partly confined by fetters, round its head, and danced with the wildeſt ecſtacy. Every faculty was loſt in horror: ſhe dropped the lamp; and, unable to ſupport herſelf, ſunk on the ground, and the horrid phantom circled its arms around her: ſhe exerted all her ſtrength, and at length reſcued herſelf from the dreadful embrace. She ran acroſs the room, and feeling

feeling another door, exerted herſelf to draw the bolts; and haſtened through ſeveral rooms, where nothing impeded her flight.

The moon now ſhone bright through the caſements; ſhe deſcended to a paſſage, and feeling her way through a dark cell, a low door ſtood open, and in a few moments ſhe found herſelf on the ramparts. Her reaſon ſtill obſcured by terror, and hardly knowing what ſhe did, ſhe ran on. "Who paſſes?" ſaid the centinel. She ſpoke not: he ſaw the white figure glide ſwiftly by him, and, uttering a ſhriek, ran as faſt the contrary way. Somebody ruſhed forward, and caught her in his arms: it was Albert; and while he ſuſtained her there, his voice ſeemed to recal

recal a ſoul almoſt burſting from its manſion.

" Oh, my Clara, much as I have to ſay to thee, this is not a time for delay: the centinel will rouſe his comrade; and if we do not eſcape, more dangers await us, and thou again wilt be torn from thy Albert." " Oh fly," ſaid Clara; " I can brave all dangers but that of again loſing thee." A gate was opened for them by Baptiſt:—" Take the path over the mountain," ſaid he, " and reſt not till you reach St. Benedict."

Encouraged by the preſence of her Albert, and knowing that her happineſs, nay even her life, depended on the preſent moment, Clara forgot the weakneſs of her

her health, and hurried on with impetuous ardour. Albert often looked back, and as the wind murmured among the pines, he fancied that he heard the voices of their purſuers, and caſt a frantic look on Clara. Leſt the ſound of their voices ſhould betray them, they preſerved an unbroken ſilence, though each had many fond things to ſay, and many intereſting enquiries to make. They deſcended the other ſide of the mountain; and Clara ſhuddered as they entered on the gloom of the foreſt. "It is our only refuge," ſaid Albert; "I will conduct thee to happineſs."

They now heard the ſound of voices: "I will lay down my life to defend thee," whiſpered Albert. "Our only chance

chance is in flight," ſaid Clara: "let us conceal ourſelves in the thicker parts of the foreſt." "But the hidden paths are not known to me," ſaid Albert: "and canſt thou bear the horrors of night till the dawn ſhall direct our way?" "With thee," ſaid Clara, "I can encounter any thing." The voices now ſeemed nearer, and Albert haſtened on with his trembling companion; but their way was impeded by brambles, and by ſtumps of trees that had been felled. Exhauſted by long ſuffering, Clara's tottering limbs would no longer ſupport her, and ſhe ſunk almoſt lifeleſs into the arms of Albert. Deſtitute of every means of reſtoring her, he laid her on the ground, and threw himſelf by her in deſpair:—but the rain, which now pattered among the trees, fell

on

on her face, and ſomewhat revived her; and ſhe thus addreſſed him: "The hand of death, my dear Albert, is upon me; my ſorrows are drawing to their cloſe. I die content; for thou art convinced of my love, and I breathe my laſt in thy arms." "Oh Clara, Clara!" exclaimed Albert, ſtarting up and claſping his hands, "have I ſo long ſuffered a life of miſery to loſe thee now? Oh Heaven! reduce me again to chains and ſlavery, but ſpare my Clara!" "Love for thee, my Albert, awakens again the deſire for life; could ſome little cordial, ſome little help be given me, I yet might live." "I can convey thee to a ſhepherd's hut," ſaid Albert, "which I know is near the path we left." He lifted her in his arms, but ſickneſs and ſorrow had made him weak,

and

and he ſunk again with her to the ground.

Clara, more anxious for his ſafety than her own, urged him to leave her, and haſten by himſelf for ſuccour. Eager at any rate to ſave her, he went towards the hut by himſelf, for aſſiſtance. Clara had life enough left to feel the horrors of her ſituation, being defenceleſs and alone, in the depths of that foreſt, of which ſhe had heard ſuch dreadful tales. But Albert returned no more. At length ſhe heard ſomebody call, and was juſt going to hail her deliverer, when ſhe heard the voice of the baron ſpeaking to ſome of his attendants. "In this foreſt," ſaid he, "I know they muſt be; and, though death meet me, I will find their retreat." Clara re-

retreated ſtill farther into the thicket, and they paſſed her. Without waiting for Albert, who ſhe doubted not would be ſeized by them before he could return to her; and dreading more than death to be again in the power of the baron; ſhe exerted all her ſtrength, and moved on: but ſhe could go but ſlowly, and her clothes, drenched in rain, hung heavily about her. She now ſupported herſelf againſt a tree, and at a little diſtance ſaw a light glimmer through the wood. Suppoſing this to be the ſhepherd's hut, or ſome hunter's cabin, ſhe went towards it; but ſtarted, on finding it the entrance to a large cavern: but in her ſituation the ſight of any human being might be a relief to her. She entered the cavern, and there ſhe pauſed. At the farther end

was

was a fire, whoſe light had attracted her: before it ſat a large figure of a man, in a tattered military dreſs; his arms were folded, his ſword lay acroſs his knees, his large eyes were raiſed in deep thought, a dreadful frown ſat on his forehead, and a black fur cap gave him a ſtill fiercer look: his dark hair had eſcaped from under it, and half concealed a face of manly, but of ſavage beauty.

## CHAPTER XII.

HE perceived not the entrance of Clara; but his dog, that lay wet and ſmoking before the fire, half raiſed himſelf, and growled at her approach: the maſter turned his head, and beheld her. She leant againſt a projection in the rock; her wet white dreſs reſembled the drapery of a ſtatue: the covering had fallen from her head, her hair flowed in looſe diſorder; and the long graſs and the weeds of the rock hung over her face, pale, emaciated, but ſtill lovely. The ſtranger ſaw it without emotion. "Go," ſaid he, with a ſtern

a ſtern voice, "thou art a woman; I will not hurt thee, though I hate thee:—go, and leave me to my cavern." "Such a voice," ſaid Clara, "I have heard in happier days; it comes like the ſpirit of Henry St. Aubigny to the ears of his dying Clara."

The ſword fell from the hands of the ſtranger; he aroſe from his ſeat, and caught the ſinking Clara. A freſh gleam of the fire fell on his face; ſhe fixed her eyes on him; and the arms that ſupported her were thoſe of Henry St. Aubigny. It appeared ſuch a viſionary ſcene, that Clara ſtill thinking the figure was the ſpirit of Henry, ſhe again ſhrunk from him, till he convinced her the report of his death was falſe as Albert's had been.

She ſpoke of his father and Eleanor: he had long ceaſed to weep, but he again heard the names of thoſe he loved, and the tears flowed down his cheeks. Clara in a few words explained her preſent ſituation; and as her languor and weakneſs returned, he ſaw the neceſſity of immediate relief, and adviſed her remaining in the cavern while he went to the monaſtery. But dreading to be again left alone, ſhe determined to go alſo; and, ſupported by him, they explored their way through the darkneſs of the foreſt, till they reached a large building.

The moon, emerging from the clouds, ſhewed its prodigious extent: it was nearly covered with ivy, but the glaſs remained in the windows; a light glimmered

mered through one of them. "It is," ſaid Henry, "the convent of St. Benedict; it can be no other." He lifted the ruſty knocker; it ran in loud echoes through the courts: but nobody came, and the light diſappeared.

Clara recollected the old caſtle, of which ſhe had heard ſuch fearful mention; the hope that had hitherto ſupported her fled, and ſhe ſunk on the ground. Henry curſed the inhumanity of its timid inhabitants; and determining at all events to gain admittance, he exerted his utmoſt ſtrength; and the door at length gave way to his efforts. At the ſame inſtant a dreadful ſhriek was heard from within. He entered a room, in which was a large fire, but ſaw nobody:

he took up a lighted ſtick, and looked around; his eye glanced up a ſtaircaſe: over the baluſters leaned an old woman, whoſe appearance for a moment appalled even the ſtout heart of Henry. Her red eyes were partly hid by her high cheek-bones; her noſe and chin nearly met; and her matted grey hairs hung from beneath a coarſe dirty cloth, tied round her head.

Henry ſurveyed her for a moment in ſilent horror, and ſpringing up the ſtairs, ſeized her: ſhe fixed her long nails in his face, and the blood flowed. He ſhook her off, and ſhe fell to the ground. "Miſerable hag!" cried he, "I want not thy death; but give me refreſhment for a day—houſeroom I will have." Terrified by

by his ſtern voice, ſhe reluctantly complied, while he fetched in Clara, and prepared her for the ſight of their infernally-looking hoſteſs. Clara partook of the refreſhment ſet before her; and Henry, again ſurveying the room, ſaw over the chimney a large hanger, and ſeveral piſtols: he took one down, and looked ſternly at the woman, who thinking he was going to kill her, begged him to ſpare her life, and ſhe would tell every thing. "He will not hurt thee," ſaid Clara, "if thou wilt not deny a little houſeroom to two poor wanderers, who in this foreſt have loſt their way."

This reſtored the recollection of the old woman, who informed them ſhe lived there to dreſs the victuals for a company

of hunters, and that for that pupoſe they were now gone on a diſtant expedition: "but they are honeſt fellows, and hurt nobody." In pity to the ſinking Clara, Henry pretended to believe this account: and learning they were ſtill at ſome diſtance from the monaſtery, and as no mule, or any conveyance could be had, he perſuaded Clara to repoſe herſelf on a bed, which the old woman ſhewed her; and the room looked more comfortable than could be expected. Henry promiſed to be her guard; and Clara, worn out by fatigue, fell aſleep.

He then drew the old hag to a diſtance, and by his threats made her confeſs that the caſtle, as he ſuſpected, was the reſidence of banditti. He knew not what

what to do: to ſtay was death, and to remove Clara without aſſiſtance was impoſſible; and the night was nearly paſſed. The old woman proteſted they would not return till the next night, being gone to a great diſtance. He knew there was a hamlet on the confines of the foreſt; and ſeizing the old wretch by the arm, and taking down a piſtol, ſwore if ſhe did not directly lead him to it, he would ſhoot her: he pulled, or rather dragged her after him; for he was impatient to reſcue Clara. As they approached the ſhepherd's hut, which Albert had been unable to find, the woman, not capable of keeping pace with him, begged he would take the ſhepherd for his guide, and let her return. This he refuſed: but thinking he might here gain the aſſiſtance he

wanted, he knocked loudly at the door; the ſhepherd admitted him, and ſaid he would go with him: he laid his piſtol on the table; and the old woman went to the end of the hut, and ſpoke in a low tone of voice to two men who lay on a bench. They ſtarted up, and before Henry could regain his piſtol, they bound him, aſſiſted by the ſhepherd.

Diſtracted at the fate of Clara, he raved and tore his hair, while the old woman ſhouted for joy. In the mean time the ſleep of Clara was broken, and diſturbed by frightful dreams: ſhe ſtarted and looked around her; the lamp was gone out; but a faint ray of light proclaimed the approaching morn. The gates of the court were now thrown open; a great

buſtle,

buſtle, and a confuſed noiſe of voices, ſounded from the rooms below. Somebody aſcended the ſtairs; her door was burſt open, and Rodolpho and Count Roderigo appeared. "Fortune, I thank thee," ſaid the latter; "this is a glorious night." But before he could proceed, the cry from below, of "Give him inſtant death!—Throw him into the dungeon!" cauſed them again to run down the ſtairs. The tumult ſubſided, and one man only ſeemed to give directions. The deep groans of their victim were diſtinctly heard; and Clara, doubting not but it was Henry, ruſhed down the ſtairs. A group of men, ſome in a military dreſs, others in that of hunters, ſurrounded a perſon lying on the ground. Some leaned thoughtfully on their muſkets, while the

half-raiſed ſword glittered in the hands of the ruffians. "O ſpare him!" ſaid Clara, darting among them. "Take her back to her chamber," ſaid Rodolpho, "and guard her well." His commands, in ſpite of her ſcreams, were obeyed.

## CHAPTER XIII.

THE perſon appointed to guard her ſtood within the room. Clara watched his ſavage countenance, on which the beam of the morning fell, till her heart died within her. Another loud knocking was heard at the gate; ſhe ſtarted up, and ran to the window. A man was borne into the court: his groans aſcended to her ear; blood was on his clothes; the hue of death ſat on his face. They raiſed him up:—it was Henry St. Aubigny. Clara uttered a ſhriek, and fell to the floor. Her ſenſes were confuſed, and

evening came on before ſhe could recollect the events that had paſſed. She was now in a different apartment. In one corner ſat the old hag. Clara ſhrieked at the ſight of her; ſhe muttered ſomething, and left her: ſhe returned again with ſome food. Clara tried to conquer the horror her looks inſpired, and aſked her whether the two priſoners ſtill lived; but ſhe conſtantly preſerved a ſullen ſilence.

A week paſſed away in this manner: ſhe had little doubt but the other priſoner was Albert; and ſhe ſhuddered to think of their dreadful fate. After her frantic fit had ſubſided, ſhe again remembered the providential reſtoration of her two friends, long mourned as dead; and hope came

came to her heart. Her confinement, notwithſtanding all this, became more and more irkſome. She had nobody to converſe with, no books to amuſe her; and long accuſtomed to take exerciſe, illneſs returned faſt upon her. The hope of her friends being alive again gave way; and by refuſing the food that was brought her, ſhe determined to haſten the only event that could terminate her ſorrows. "Thou wilt not inſult me long with thy beams," murmured the poor Clara, as the ſun darted its rays through her windows: "the happy rejoice in thy return; but as thou ſhineſt on the walls of the dungeon, the captive thinks of a world that is loſt to him, and he curſes thy hated return."

A gloomy

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A gloomy

A gloomy diſguſt of life infected her mind: the mild conſolations of religion were gone: her roſary lay neglected by her ſide; and ſhe waited her fate with the ſullenneſs of the ſuicide. The night came on in ſtorms; ſhe heeded it not: her door was opened, and ſhe ſaw without emotion Rodolpho bending over her. The beauties of her youth were fled. He marked the reſigned ſerenity of her look. "I am come," ſaid he, "ſignora—" "To end my miſery," ſaid Clara: "Rodolpho, I thank thee." "No, lady," replied he: "at the baron's caſtle you wiſhed to ſave my life:—a favour was never forgotten by Rodolpho: — take refreſhment, recover thy ſtrength of mind; ſome of thy friends are yet alive."

Clara

Clara ate ſome of the food, and drank a little of the wine he had brought her. "Thou ſaidſt ſome of my friends lived; and wilt thou deliver them and me from thy guilty maſter?" "Lady," ſaid he ſternly, "make me not change my opinion: I thought thy ſpirit bold and honourable; let that tell thee, I will never deſert him I have ſworn to ſerve." "And yet," ſaid Clara, "thou art tender-hearted; or why this viſit? Nay, at this moment the tear of pity trembles in thine eye." "It is falſe!" exclaimed he; "a woman's weakneſs never unmanned the ſoul of Rodolpho. I purſue my foes with implacable revenge. I have exulted over the quivering limbs of my dying enemies. The miſery of thy friends has been planned by me. I have marked the blaſted

blaſted proſpects of thy youth: but the cowardly tear of compaſſion ſtains not my cheek. Signora," continued he, after a pauſe, "I am not a man of words. A few more days, and thy fate is determined: till then I ſwear to protect thee: but if thou trieſt to eſcape, vengeance purſues thee."

When he left her, ſhe thought much of what this fate muſt be; and dwelt with delight on his aſſurance that ſome of her friends ſtill lived. She had now ſomething to employ her mind; and the gloomy hatred of life was fled. She thanked Heaven for having preſerved her from the crime of haſtening her own death.

The next day ſhe wandered about the caſtle, and looked from the windows on the vaſt tracts of wood that lay beyond. She again preferred her prayers to Heaven, and ſlept in peace. The next day paſſed in the ſame manner: but the ſky was ſtormy, and the ſhades of night fell early on her gloomy apartment. The old woman brought her lamp. She aſked for a book: ſhe had none; but believed the library was in the eaſtern wing of the caſtle. Clara took her lamp, and went to look for it; but ſhe could not find it: and amuſed herſelf by looking at the paintings. She went from one room to another, till ſtopped by a flight of ſteps. She looked down, and ſaw trees, and another building riſing beyond it. To eſcape from Rodolpho ſhe knew was impoſſible.

poſſible. But wiſhing to breathe a little air, ſhe deſcended the ſteps, and found what ſhe took for a grove of trees was a large room. The cieling had fallen in, and many trees had grown up among the ruins.

The night was now calm; but the moon and every ſtar were hid in dark clouds. She carefully raiſed her lamp to look round. A beam or two remained; but burned to a cinder. She now recollected part of the caſtle had been deſtroyed by fire; that it had been the reſidence of one of her parents. "Here, too, he met his mournful fate! To find ſome little memorial of him would be a conſolation to one who no longer felt the endearing kindneſs of a friend." A deſire that

that was not to be reſiſted led her to explore theſe ruins. She went forward a few ſteps, and then concealed her lamp, leſt the birds which the light attracted ſhould extinguiſh it. She now ſaw a flight of ſtone ſteps, and found when ſhe aſcended them that the ravage of the fire had gone no farther.

The ſuperb rooms through which ſhe paſſed appeared not to have been viſited for many years by a human being except herſelf. The windows were broken; but the cielings were entire, and much of the furniture remained perfect. An awful ſtillneſs, like that of death, prevailed. Clara ſtarted at the ſound of her own footſteps, and threw a fearful glance on the

the pictures as she passed them. Most of the doors were open. She now came to one that was shut; she placed her hand on the lock, and again drew it back.

"It was here perhaps my father died: sights may occur to which I am not equal." She then recollected all she had heard of his fate: that his bones had been found, and interred. She again went to the door; but it was locked, and the key gone. She sat down in an opposite chair, with her mind wound up to such a pitch of terror, that she almost expected to see it open. She saw something lying on the floor: it was a rusty key: she snatched it up, and applied it to the lock. It turned with

with difficulty; and the door ſlowly grated on its hinges. She took her light, and with a ſhuddering horror entered the apartment.

## CHAPTER XIV.

THE room was hung with purple velvet; the bed was of the ſame; the curtains were drawn cloſely round: near it, on a table, lay a letter half written.—Clara read, 'It is the hour of midnight. I have left my bed; for in the ſtillneſs of the night, a voice has warned me to ſleep no more, for the murderer's dagger is lifted to my breaſt. O, my Adelaide! a terror ſuch as thy Montalt never felt till now, unnerves the arm that was ſtrong in battle, and appals the heart that never ſhrunk from danger: but who can this aſſaſſin be? But it is the languor of ſick-

neſs—

neſs—I will go to my reſt, and I will think of thee. To de Clifford I have revealed the ſecrets of our———." No more was written, and Clara looked fearfully to the bed. She graſped the curtains: a ſudden wind aroſe, and roared in the chimney; and one ruſhing through the next room, ſhut the door of her entrance with great violence. She thought it was cloſed by an inviſible hand, that the place of her father's death might alſo be hers.

In this agony of fear ſhe had pulled aſide the curtain. Drops of blood were on the covering, and the eyeleſs ſkeleton of a human figure lie on the pillow. She uttered a faint ſhriek, threw down her lamp, and ſunk lifeleſs on the bed.

The

The moment that recalled her ſenſes was one of unutterable horror; for her cheek reſted on that of the ſkeleton, and ſhe had graſped one of the arms that were extended on the bed. She threw herſelf on the floor, unable to retreat from this terrible apartment. The lightning that flaſhed through the ſhutters, and the thunder that roared at a diſtance, revived her a little; "for theſe ſounds," ſaid ſhe, "are heard by other beings like me, who are not very remote; and I could ſoon reach that part of the caſtle." Before ſhe aroſe from her knees, ſhe preferred her prayers for the ſouls of her departed parents. "An awful ſenſation tells me, that this night will determine my fate. I have done no injury; I have committed no crimes. O let me then

with

with fortitude ſurmount the horrors that ſurround me!" She aroſe, and found the door which ſhe opened, and with faltering ſteps again traverſed the ſuite of rooms. The lightning that darted through the caſements enabled her to find her way; and her heart was much lighter when ſhe reached the top of the ſtairs that would conduct her to her own room; but in her haſte ſhe had taken a wrong turn, and found herſelf in a long paſſage, at the farther end of which hung a large lamp. She was now in that part of the caſtle where its preſent poſſeſſors ſlept; and ſhe could now have welcomed even one of thoſe ruffians as a friend. Oppoſite the lamp was a door; it was not quite cloſed: ſhe ſaw a fire in the apartment, and lights on a table, at which a man in

a handſome undreſs was ſitting. His hands were placed before his eyes, and he was ſo loſt in thought, that he did not hear her enter the room. He perceived her not till ſhe had approached the table; at the ſound of her voice he ſtarted, and diſcovered to the aſtoniſhed Clara the Baron de Clifford. She turned away with diſguſt, and would have left him, but the impetuous baron ruſhed forward and prevented her. From her terror and broken ſentences, he found ſhe had wandered about the caſtle till chance had conducted her to him. "Where," ſaid ſhe—"where is my beloved Albert? Where is thy ſon?" "Thy beloved Albert is in the deepeſt dungeon of his father's caſtle. Thy Henry too is a priſoner in this place: and I am told they wear

wear their chains like heroes. I alſo am a captive; for in purſuing thee through the foreſt, I was ſeized and brought to this place. O Clara! my blood curdles when I tell thee, that the leader of this gang is my ſon." "A ſon," replied Clara, "that is worthy ſuch a father." "Fooliſh girl, thy reſentment hurts thyſelf alone. This man, for I will not call him ſon, promiſes to give me liberty, and reſign thee to me, on condition that I give him half my fortune, with which he is to retire to another kingdom.—Already is the contract made, and to-morrow night thou wouldſt have been delivered to me;—before now, indeed, I might have called thee mine, but for that curſed Rodolpho, at whom even theſe ruffians tremble. The private ways of

this place are known to me; let us then fly from this horrid banditti." "I will brave all their malice, and call their cruelty mercy," ſaid the enraged Clara, "compared with him who would wade through the blood of his child." "Proud girl," replied the baron, "I laugh at thy reproaches; but remember, on thy compliance depends the fate of thy captive friends." "I thank thee for the information," ſaid Clara, haughtily; "the noble youths will lay down their lives with exultation, rather than purchaſe them at ſuch a price: tyrant, I defy thy malice!" "Clara," ſaid the baron calmly, "this is not an hour to be thrown away; this once rely on my honour, and fly from a place where our lives are not ſafe. I need not tell thee the charm that keeps

me

me within theſe hated walls, but now let us fly.—I repeat, the ſecret ways are all known to me." "I doubt it not, my lord: you know alſo the eaſtern tower. Tremble, de Clifford! the orphan of the Baron Montalt has beheld the blood of her father, and the vengeance of Heaven hangs over the murderer's head."

The limbs of the baron trembled; a ghaſtly paleneſs overſpread his face: it was but a momentary fear; for the wine he had been drinking had added to the brutal courage of his nature. "The ſoul of de Clifford," ſaid he, "ſhrinks not at a woman's threats: all who oppoſe my fortune and my happineſs fall by my arm. Montalt did both, and the dagger did its duty. Look at the mighty warrior,"

pointing to a portrait over an oppoſite door: "I contemplate it, and I laugh to think how the glory of the proud is fallen. He robbed me of Adelaide: but a ſecond Adelaide is now in my power; and though hell ſhall let looſe its horrors, I will not be driven from my purpoſe." Clara ſhrunk in vain from the brutal baron; but the thunder now burſt like a thouſand cannon. The lightning, in vivid flaſhes, darted through the windows: nothing but the ſtorm was heard. The old battlements rocked in the blaſt; the trees of the foreſt fell before it; and if a momentary pauſe enſued, it ſeemed like the awful cloſe of nature. No ſhade of fear paſſed over the face of the baron. "At ſuch an hour of ſupernatural horror," ſaid Clara, "doſt thou not ſhrink from thy hated

hated purpoſe? At ſuch an hour the grave gives up her dead; beings of another world ride on the blaſt. Hark! in the pauſes of the ſtorm, heardſt thou not the groans of thoſe thou haſt murdered?" "Away!" ſaid de Clifford, "we will have no more of theſe childiſh fears: they ſhake only the feeble in ſoul." Clara again ſtarted from him, and raiſing her claſped hands, exclaimed, "O, my God! deſert not the orphan's cauſe! O, ſave her from this ruffian;—ſave her from the murderer of her father! Shades of my parents, will ye not riſe to ſuccour your ill-fated child?" "They will," ſaid a hollow voice: the door flew open, and the pale ſpectre of a woman appeared at it. "It is—it is—Adelaide!" ſaid the baron, who ſtaggered a few ſteps, and fell.

Clara ſtood fixed with terror at this ſupernatural interpoſition. "Follow," ſaid the phantom. Clara obeyed the awful ſummons with trembling ſteps: the figure walked ſlowly before her, and bore a taper in its hand. At the end of the gallery ſtood a complete ſuit of armour: the phantom ſtopped before it, ſhook its head, and then went on. It deſcended a flight of ſtone ſteps to ſome vaults. Clara proceeded not; it looked back, and beckoned; but ſhe obeyed it not: it returned; a look of anger was on its face; it graſped the hand of Clara. She ſhrunk from the touch—"I will follow thee," ſaid the terrified Clara, "lead whereever thou wilt."

## CHAPTER XV.

UNABLE to reſiſt her awful conductor, ſhe followed through the long arched vaults; a door opened into a ſmall one; it cloſed after them: a great bell tolled: the ſpectre vaniſhed, and Clara was left alone and in darkneſs. She awaited, in breathleſs horror, the concluſion of this dreadful ſcene: the ſtorm was ended, and all was ſtill: ſhe heard no ſound but of the bell, which tolled at ſtated intervals. At length it ceaſed, and a ſtrain of celeſtial muſic, accompanied by ſeraphic voices, was heard; and again

it died away in the ſtillneſs of the night. She now ſaw a faint light ſhine through the crevices of the door; ſhe gently opened it: a taper ſtood at the top of a flight of ſteps; ſhe aſcended; and as ſhe walked through the vaulted paſſage, the ſtrains of muſic, at intervals, were heard: ſhe entered a ſmall room, or cell; it was dimly lighted by a lamp; a human ſkull and ſome bones were ſcattered about. Clara ſunk down on a ſeat, and putting her hands before her eyes, reſted her arms on a table. The laſt ſtrain of the muſic had died away, the bell tolled no more; ſomething, as if counting its ſteps, ſlowly paſſed along the paſſage: it entered the cell; its icy hand graſped hers; its cold cheek preſſed againſt her face: ſhe raiſed her eyes; it was the ghoſt of St. Aubigny:

ny: ſhe ſurveyed it for a moment, and ſunk to the ground.

St. Aubigny, as before related, had received the infant Clara from Adelaide, who had privately become the wife of the Baron Montalt. He had returned to cloſe the eyes of his mother, and he forbore to embitter her laſt moments by the diſcloſure of his marriage. The baroneſs, in the mean time, derived ſome conſolation from the ſociety of a faithful attendant, who had been the confidant of their marriage; and ſhe looked forward to the time when, in the character of the Baroneſs Montalt, ſhe ſhould claim her child from St. Aubigny: but, alarmed by the long ſilence and abſence of her lord, ſhe was no longer to be ſoothed by the

conſolations of Conſtance. A thouſand fears, known only to the boſom of love, aſſailed her; at laſt, diſguiſed as a pilgrim, and accompanied by her attendant, ſhe ſet out for the abode of St. Aubigny, hoping there to gain information of her lord, and embrace her infant daughter. But though fortitude was a ſtrong feature in her character, it would not enable her to bear up againſt fatigue of body, and anxiety of mind; and an illneſs ſeized her when within a few miles of what had been the reſidence of St. Aubigny. But it was ſo no longer; for Conſtance reached it ſome little time after the dreadful cataſtrophe which had befallen a part of his family.

She returned to the unhappy lady with the

the mournful news, that ſhe had no longer a huſband or a child; for there alſo ſhe learnt the fatal end of the Baron Montalt. She mourned as a wife and a mother, who finds the fairy dream of bliſs vaniſh in a moment, and forbodes a life of hopeleſs miſery. The proofs of their marriage had been left in the poſſeſſion of her lord, and his papers had now fallen into the hands of his brother-in-law the Baron de Clifford, who had once perſecuted her with his guilty love;—a love which had been long turned into hatred;—and ſhe ſhrunk at the idea of making applications to him.

Conſcious alſo how much her character had ſuffered from her elopement with Lord Montalt, ſhe reſolved to retire to Sicily,

Sicily, of which country ſhe was a native, and bury in its ſolitude her paſt ſorrows. She poſſeſſed both money and jewels, ſufficient to ſupport herſelf, and her faithful Conſtance; but while in this place ſhe remained a few weeks to regain her health, ſhe learnt from a traveller that Lady de Clifford had a daughter, which had been named Adelaide, and the age correſponding with that of the child ſhe had loſt, the warm feelings of a parent were again afloat, and ſhe could not baniſh the idea but that it was her own child. It was a viſionary thought, but it was encouraged by Conſtance, who, eager to ſerve her beloved lady, ſet out for the baron's caſtle.

She learned nothing there to confirm her ſuſpicions; yet, if ſhe could perſuade the baroneſs that it was her child, it might heal her broken heart. She eaſily got acquainted with the ſervant who had the care of the child. Manon was a lively French girl, and while the ſtern manners of the baron frightened her, the mournful temper of her lady made her life uncomfortable. She remembered and loved the Baroneſs Montalt; and a little perſuaſion induced her to fly to her protection with the infant that was intruſted to her. The baroneſs wept over it with tears of joy; but obſerving its weak health, ſhe took a cottage in a little valley till its ſtrength was equal to the voyage. But the reflections of the Lady de Clifford's ſufferings for the loſs of her child, filled her

mind

mind with pain and remorſe; and before ſhe quitted Savoy for ever, ſhe determined to ſee her, and confeſs what ſhe had done. She reaſſumed her pilgrim's habit, and leaving the care of the child to Manon, ſhe went, accompanied by Conſtance.

The Baron de Clifford was abſent from his caſtle, and his lady was inconſolable. The pilgrim was admitted, and diſcovered herſelf to the lady, who was once her friend, and now her ſiſter. But blaſted were her hopes, when ſhe learnt that the infant Adelaide was really the child of Lady de Clifford, who, conſcious of her declining health, and dreading to leave her daughter to be brought up by the furious baron, or his deſpicable

ſiſter,

ſiſter, conſented to her ſtill remaining with the Baroneſs Montalt, on condition that at the age of twenty ſhe ſhould be reſtored to her father; as her mind would then be formed, and her principles fixed. The faithful Conſtance fell ill, and was unable to be removed from the caſtle; every hour brought increaſing danger; Lady de Clifford, anxious for her child, left to the care of a ſervant, and hourly expecting the return of her lord, was impatient for her friend to depart, which ſhe at length did, leaving Conſtance behind her; who, if ſhe recovered, of which there was not much hope, was to follow her. The baroneſs waited at her ſolitary cottage many tedious weeks in vain, for Conſtance came no more. She then departed for Sicily with her little charge.

There,

There, in a romantic valley by the ſea-ſide, amid ſome ſcattered huts, ſhe raiſed her neat cottage, and ſoftened her ſorrows in forming the mind of the young Adelaide. She reflected how ſmall was the portion of happineſs that gilded the gloom of human life, and that fortitude was the virtue that rendered us moſt independent of our fellow-creatures. Few then were the tender tales that were poured into the ear of the Lady Adelaide, but the flame of humanity glowed ſtrongly in her breaſt. Exerciſe gave ſtrength to her body, whilſt health, rather than beauty, bloomed on her cheek; and her proteſtreſs taught her, that wealth was only valuable as it gave us the power of aſſiſting our fellow-creatures.

## CHAPTER XVI.

THUS paſſed the firſt twenty years of her life in ſolitude, at which ſhe repined not, for ſhe knew not what ſociety was. The baroneſs wept to think the time was arrived when ſhe ought to perform her promiſe, and return the Lady Adelaide back to Savoy. But of this deſign ſhe had not yet informed her. The baroneſs and Adelaide loved to wander in the gloom of evening, to ſurvey the diſtant Ætna throwing its fiery columns in the air; or contemplate the ſea in all its ma-

jeſty

jeſty of ſtorms. It was in one of theſe rambles, that from a rocky eminence, on which they ſtood, they beheld a ſhip beat about in the waves. It ſoon approached near enough for them to diſcover the ſtandard of Mahomet. Though the corſairs had always infeſted theſe ſeas, yet at this part none of them had appeared for many years.

A boat was at length put out from the veſſel, and a man thrown on the beach. The ſhip was ſoon at ſuch a diſtance, that it appeared only as a ſpeck in the horizon. They then approached the body: it was ſtill warm, though much wounded. The dreſs was that of Savoy; and of no vulgar rank. The baroneſs watched over it, while the Lady Adelaide haſtened for

aſſiſtance.

aſſiſtance. The ſtranger was conveyed to their cottage. His life was reſtored, and his wounds at length healed. The baroneſs was delighted to find that he whoſe life they had ſaved was the ſon of St. Aubigny. He told them of his departure from Savoy with his beloved Albert. But, in the pride of his heart, he named not the diſgrace in which he left his country.

They had been bound to a diſtant port in Sicily; a corſair appeared in ſight, ſo inferior in force, that he was aſtoniſhed, inſtead of attacking it, to ſee their captain order his boat, and go on board of it. The boat was ſoon after ſent back for Albert and Henry. They were aſtoniſhed at the proceeding; but were obliged

to

to obey. The captain returned to his own ſhip, and they ſaw him no more. The follower of Mahomet then informed them they were his ſlaves; that they had been ſold to him, as people whoſe crimes demanded this puniſhment. Albert wore his chains in ſullen ſilence; but Henry's bold reſiſtance coſt him many a wound. To the commander they appeared thoſe of death. They had no ſurgeon on board; and, admiring even the bravery of a Chriſtian, he ordered him to be put on ſhore; that, as he ſaw it was inhabited, he might have a chance for his life. Henry, on his part, heard with equal aſtoniſhment the adventures of the baroneſs and the Lady Adelaide: the former aſked a thouſand minute queſtions of his family: he informed her how much Clara reſembled her;

her; but affirmed, that ſhe was the child of his father's brother; and that one infant had periſhed with his mother. But ſhe was now determined to ſee St. Aubigny, and learn from him alone the fate of her child. Henry was to be their guide when his ſtrength would allow it. He marked the winning manners of the Lady Adelaide; and he thought of the ſiſter he had left: yet ſhe reſembled her but little. She had no feminine fears: ſtrength of mind was her greateſt excellence. Henry felt her power over his ſoul: he wondered at it; but he ſought not to hide it. He knew his abject ſituation, yet he ſpoke of his love to Adelaide. Diſſimulation was not in her nature. She accepted his vows, and acknowledged her regard for him.

Fearful

Fearful of his reception from his father, charmed with the ſublime ſcenery that ſurrounded him, and the companion of his walks, he ſtill delayed the time of their departure. But the ſituation of his exiled friend aroſe in his mind, and poiſoned every joy. Adelaide wept not the fate of her brother; but weighed in her own mind how he might be reſtored to them. They often wandered on the beach, and looked anxiouſly for ſome diſtant ſail. At length one appeared. Henry leaped into a boat, and haſtened towards it. The veſſel was of Sicily; and the captain informed him they had taken a Corſair. He requeſted to ſee the priſoners; and was delighted to behold among them the captain to whom Albert was a ſlave. But his ſoul ſunk

in

in deſpair, when he informed him that he had not been many days at ſea before he ſold him again to the commander of another veſſel, bound to Algiers. But ſtill hoping to gain more information, he intreated the captain to reſign his priſoner to him, which he readily did. His confinement having rendered him weak and ill, he was borne to the cottage; and with attentive care ſoon was reſtored to health.

The heart of Muſtapha was caſt in nature's beſt mould. He informed them that the maſter of Albert was his friend; and he doubted not but he might be ranſomed. Henry was reſolved to go with him, reſtore his friend to liberty, or ſhare his ſlavery. With all the money and

jewels the baroneſs poſſeſſed, he took his leave, and departed. Their voyage was nearly ended, when ſuch a ſtorm aroſe, that they were obliged to quit the ſhip, and take to their boats. In this ſcene of dreadful confuſion, the box containing the ranſom was loſt; and Henry once more found himſelf on a foreign ſhore, deſtitute of money. But Muſtapha comforted him with the aſſurance, that his word would be taken for the ranſom. As they were not far diſtant from the houſe of his friend, he conducted him to it; but deſired him to ſay nothing of their buſineſs till the next morning.

Muſtapha preſented him to Oſmyn as a Chriſtian who had ſaved his life. He received him kindly, and treated him hoſpitably.

pitably. In the morning Muſtapha ſpoke of their errand, and of the loſt ranſom, for which he would pledge his word; and requeſted that the ſlave Albert might be delivered to his friend. But Oſmyn murmured at the propoſition. Henry then offered, if Albert was reſtored, to become the ſlave in his ſtead. Oſmyn ſurveyed the manly ſtrength of his figure; and rejoiced at the propoſal. But the ſoul of Muſtapha ſwelled with indignation: "And wilt thou," ſaid he, "take as a ſlave him whom thou haſt entertained as a friend; and with whom thou haſt eaten ſalt? My home is diſtant; but canſt thou doubt the word of a muſſulman?" But he ſpoke in vain. Henry ſaw his friend, and his heart bled at his dejected appearance. A veſſel was

ready to ſail for Sicily: he was determined to ſupply his place, till Muſtapha ſhould return; and that Albert ſhould immediately depart, whoſe generous ſoul felt the kindneſs of his friend, but ſteadily refuſed to leave him. Henry at length ſucceeded in getting him on board by ſtratagem; and telling him where to wait for him in Sicily, returned to his maſter.

## CHAPTER XVII.

THE honeſt Muſtapha ſoon returned, according to his word, and enabled Henry to follow his friend. The voyage was tedious; and he landed ſome few miles from the habitation of the baroneſs, cold and hungry, and his clothes by this time in a tattered ſtate. But much of the day was before him; and he anticipated the joy of a ſincere welcome. He found the doors and windows cloſed; and it ſeemed quite deſerted. He turned away in deſpair, and threw himſelf on the ground.

A man approached him; it was Dennis: he ſaw not the ſword of Henry, and his manner was inſolent. "Your friend Albert," ſaid he, "has left me here to tell you, he has taken the ladies, and gone to Savoy." "Ah!" ſaid Henry, ſtarting; "could he not wait a little for the friend who put on chains that he might be free? But can I believe the infamous wretch who could baſely betray his maſter, and ſell his countrymen? Who was thy employer?" "My employer," replied the fellow, "was Count Roderigo. Part of the deſign has failed; but the hour is at hand when I can make him amends." And he aimed a ſtiletto at the breaſt of Henry. It only grazed the ſkin. He drew his

ſword,

ſword, and plunged it in the villain's heart.

The night was now come on; but he reached the hut of a fiſherman, whom he well remembered. The account of the departure of his friends was confirmed to him; and in his rage he curſed the pride of Albert, who he thought had diſcovered his paſſion for Adelaide, and hurried her away. He even thought her equally faulty; and in a ſullen humour ſet out for Savoy.

When he reached St. Maurice, he lingered about it, till the duſk of evening, and then dreaded to enter it. He ſaw a group of children at play, and ventured to aſk them ſome queſtions:

one of them was Fanchon. She told him of Clara's ſhort abode with them, of her return to the caſtle, and her death; for Fanchon was ſure ſhe was dead, or ſhe would not have ſtaid ſo long from them. From the neighbours he learned the melancholy fate of his father and ſiſter; and that Diego was at the convent of St. Benedict. Thither he was going, when from the ſtorms of the night he had taken ſhelter in the cavern where Clara found him.

Albert, releaſed from captivity by his noble-minded friend, had proceeded with an aching heart for Sicily. The baroneſs and Adelaide received him with rapture. There he found Dennis, who told him, that having heard from a Sicilian of a young

young Savoyard being put on ſhore by a corſair, they judged from the deſcription it might be Henry; and he had been ſent to prevent his return by Count Roderigo, whom he acknowledged to have been his employer in this infamous buſineſs. With every appearance of contrition he mourned his paſt crimes, and threw himſelf on the mercy of the tender-hearted Albert; who, while he pardoned him, felt his ſoul burn with indignation at the conduct of his unnatural brother.

The health of the baroneſs began faſt to decline, and ſhe was anxious to reſtore Adelaide to her country. Albert too was impatient to ſee his Clara, and eager to procure the ranſom of Henry; for he knew not Muſtapha, and relied

not on his promiſe. But before he left the coaſt of Sicily, in caſe Henry ſhould be able to return to it, he wrote a long account of the reaſons of their departure, which he left to the care of what he thought the penitent Dennis. When they reached what had once been the reſidence of St. Aubigny, the ſame mournful account was given to them, that was afterwards related to Henry.

The monaſtery of St. Benedict was not far from the caſtle of the Montalts, and, like that, ſituated in the depths of the foreſt. Near its holy walls, in a ſequeſtered ſpot, the mother of the late baron had raiſed a few rooms, where ſhe loved to retire from the ſplendid ſcenes of the caſtle; and there the preſent baroneſs

neſs meant for a time to conceal herſelf from de Clifford. It was in the power of the holy brethren to grant her requeſt; and ſhe knew, when ſhe explained her ſituation, it would not be denied. She remembered the name of Jerome, who was beloved by her lord; and Albert went to ſeek him. From him he learned with aſtoniſhment and joy that St. Aubigny ſtill lived, and had a room allotted him in the convent.

Calmly as the good St. Aubigny had taught himſelf to view the various changes of life, yet the happineſs of again ſeeing his beloved pupil, and the hope of embracing his ſon, of whoſe innocence Albert aſſured him, was almoſt too much for his weak frame; and the eager joy

of Diego would hardly permit the mutual recital to take place. St. Aubigny ſpoke of the ſorrows that had bowed him down, of the diſcovery of Clara's relationſhip to the Baron de Clifford. "The good baron," continued St. Aubigny, "wiſhed to reſtore to her a part of her father's fortune, and form for her a ſuitable eſtabliſhment; but while I lingered in miſery, ſhe refuſed to liſten to ſchemes of happineſs. To win her from her gloomy reſolutions, I conſented to the baron's propoſal, of the report of my death being ſpread; and I conſented the more willingly, as my poor neighbours would be often coming to ſee me, and it was more than my broken ſpirits could bear."

When

When Albert hinted to him the dreadful ſuſpicion that the baron had connived at the dark tranſactions that had made him a ſlave, he trembled with a thouſand fears for Clara, whom he was determined immediately to demand. But Albert recommended caution; and in the character of a harper got acceſs to the baron's caſtle, by means of the faithful Baptiſt, who likewiſe effected his and Clara's eſcape, by bribing Albert's guard, and ſpeaking to her at the concealed door under the tapeſtry. The baroneſs had been informed her child lived, and waited in awful expectation for the time that ſhe ſhould preſent to the world the heireſs of Baron Montalt. To her the ſecret way was known, that led from the monaſtery to the caſtle. St. Aubigny had

had gained her admittance into the holy ſanctuary; and after preferring her prayers to Heaven, ſhe proceeded alone to viſit thoſe apartments where ſhe had firſt heard the voice of love, and where was buried all her ſhort-lived happineſs. At the door of one of the rooms the voice of the baron and of Clara arreſted her ſteps; ſhe heard enough to know the dangerous ſituation of her child. The moment was not to be loſt: her appearance, as ſhe expected, deprived the baron of ſenſe; and the courage of Clara in following her, was even beyond her hopes. No time was left for explanation; but in the vault of the monaſtery, ſhe knew ſhe was ſafe. Not knowing how to proceed, ſhe extinguiſhed the light, and left her to conſult St. Au-

bigny.

bigny. He was attending the funeral of one of the monks; and the knell of death, and the voices of the choir had reached the ears of the terrified Clara. When the ſervice was over, St. Aubigny, inſtead of going to his own room, where the baroneſs awaited him, went to the cell of Jerome, where he diſcovered himſelf to his poor Clara.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

SUCH were the adventures that were related to her when life was reſtored, which had fled at the ſight of St. Aubigny. She heard it as the voice of enchantment, and ſurveyed her mother with awful regard and veneration. She looked on the pallid face of St. Aubigny; ſhe ſaw it again viſited by the gleam of joy; and her heart ſwelled with rapture. But ſhe remembered the uncertain fate of Albert and Henry; and happineſs again vaniſhed. The former ſhe had heard was at the caſtle of his father, and thither

Diego,

Diego, who had forgotten all his infirmities and fears, went to make enquiries.

Clara looked in vain on Adelaide for thoſe beauties which had won the heart of Henry. The humanity ſhe diſplayed in attending on her, the calmneſs and fortitude with which ſhe looked forward, convinced her it was the nobler qualities of the mind that had charmed the ſon of St. Aubigny.

In a few hours ſhe was tranſported by the ſight of Albert. Soon after he had left her in the foreſt, he had been ſeized by the baron's people, and was now again releaſed by the means of Baptiſt. St. Aubigny took him to his own room, and

ſpoke

ſpoke of the neceſſity of driving from the caſtle its preſent infamous inhabitants: he feared ſome military aſſiſtance muſt be called in; but he wiſhed Albert to haſten to the next town, and conſult the chief magiſtrate, who was well known to St. Aubigny. Albert obeyed, and the good father endeavoured to prepare their minds for the great events that muſt ſoon take place. He aroſe to give them his parting bleſſing for the night, when Diego, with a face pale with fear, entered, and ſaid the moſt horrid looking creature he ever ſaw, entreated to be admitted; and inſtantly the old hag from the caſtle ruſhed in. "Holy father," ſaid ſhe, throwing herſelf at the feet of St. Aubigny, "a dying penitent begs to ſee you: he told me where to find you, and

and entreats you to receive the laſt words of the dying de Clifford." "I will go to him—lead the way." Clara caught his arm. "O go not," ſhe cried, "my beloved friend; it is a ſnare to lure thee to deſtruction. O go not to the fatal caſtle." "Nobody is there now," ſaid a ſervant, who had juſt entered, "but my maſter and Baptiſt." "My child," ſaid St. Aubigny, "my holy profeſſion will ſecure me: on the confeſſion of the baron depends thy future fate."

As he retired he ſpoke a few words to Jerome and the baroneſs, who then took the hand of her daughter, and ſaid, "Will not my child ſupport a little longer that fortitude which has carried her through ſuch terrible ſcenes?" She then proceeded

to

to the caſtle by the private paſſage, and the Lady Adelaide, Jerome, and Clara, followed in ſilence. They came at length to the room adjoining to that in which the baron lay. St. Aubigny had arrived before them, and they heard his mild voice breathing comfort to the wretched de Clifford. He then came and conducted them to the ſide of his bed. The Baron de Clifford ſhrunk from their view, and exclaimed, "Holy father, ſpare me farther ſhame." "My lord," ſaid the baroneſs, "we come not to inſult: we come to ſpeak comfort. My religion teaches me to forgive the uſurper of my child's fortune." "And doſt thou alſo," ſaid the baron, in a hollow tone—"doſt thou forgive the murderer of her father?" "Murderer!" ſaid the baroneſs, ſtarting,

"Yes,

"Yes, murderer," repeated he: "I hated the virtues and the fame of the Baron Montalt. He confided to me his marriage. Jealouſy, revenge, and avarice, took poſſeſſion of my ſoul. At the hour of midnight I ſtole to his room, and murdered him. An inſtant dread of diſcovery ſeized me: I ſet fire to the caſtle; but the flames were got under before much was conſumed; but I ſuppoſed the fatal room was buried in the ruins. Bertram ſhared my confidence. He procured ſome bones; they were thrown into the ruins. They were afterwards found, and buried as thoſe of the Baron Montalt."

The baroneſs turned away much agitated. "I can pardon," ſaid ſhe, "an

uſurper,

uſurper, but not a murderer." "He is," ſaid Adelaide, taking her hand—"he is my father, the father of your own Adelaide." "I have often," ſaid St. Aubigny, "felt the ſhafts of malice, but never—never did my heart refuſe forgiveneſs." "Do with me as you will," ſaid the baroneſs, as they led her back to the bed, where ſhe aſſured him of her pardon. "I had been told," ſaid the baron, "I might expect a daughter; but, alas! ſuch a parent has no claim on the tenderneſs of his children." "My lord," ſaid Adelaide, "the noble-minded friend of my mother has taught me the firſt of virtues is, to forgive. I am thy child, and have no right to reproach thee. In the depths of ſolitude let thy remaining days be ſpent; and thy daughter will be the ſoother

ſoother of thy ſorrows." "Alas! the wounded mind of de Clifford," ſaid he, "can never feel thy conſolations. Ye know not half my crimes. My poor perſecuted Albert I hated; for to him I found by a former will the Lord Montalt had bequeathed his fortune: it would otherwiſe have come to his ſiſter, the wife whoſe days I embittered.

"To St. Aubigny, Albert was confided. I thought he would be taught to deſpiſe his father, and I curſed his independence. My eldeſt ſon, heir of my fortune, and of my vices, I equally diſliked: he ſought to gain me in his power: he ſaw my guilty paſſion for Clara. The banditti who confined her near the convent of St. Agatha were his friends: I con-

connived at the crime; and I liſtened to the propoſal of keeping Albert from his native land. I ſhudder to think, that I even conſented to the means by which my ſon was exiled.

"In ſpite of much natural ferocity, I have been often a prey to remorſe. The commiſſion of one crime leads to others: my mind was fertile to remove every chance of diſcovery. I found a confidential ſervant of the baroneſs; ill health was the plea for her remaining. I had met her in my walks, and thought ſhe regarded me with an eye of ſuſpicion. I had her ſeized, and privately conveyed to the north wing of my caſtle: her miſery at times deprived her of her ſenſes; but I ſhuddered to ſhed more blood. Her

food

food was conveyed to her by Bertram; or my ſervant Antony, who had the care of the caſtle in my abſence. He is dead: and if Bertram has neglected her, ſhe muſt have periſhed for want of food."

Clara recollected the figure in the black veil. "Poor Conſtance!" ſaid the baroneſs, "thy fidelity deſerved a better fate; but I will haſten to ſee if thou ſtill liveſt:" but as ſhe was hurrying to the door, Albert entered.

## CHAPTER XIX.

"LET me," ſaid he, "conduct you from this place:" a group of people now ruſhed into the room, and prevented his proceeding. The light of their torches threw a gleam on the dark countenance of Rodolpho, who was followed by Count Roderigo. As he approached Clara, his eye caught Albert, and he ſtarted as if he had ſeen a ſpectre. "Then Dennis," he involuntarily exclaimed, "is a faithleſs raſcal!" "And what," ſaid Albert, coming forward, with a firm ſtep and ſtern voice—"and what is his murderous maſter?" "Soldiers are entering the courts!"

exclaimed

exclaimed a voice from without. "Let them await my commands," replied Albert. "Then all is over," ſaid Roderigo; who thus addreſſed his father: "Look around thee, hoary traitor! ſee the crimes that have been committed, and call them all thy own. The laſt office of my tongue ſhall be confeſſion." "Be it ſo," ſaid St. Aubigny; "and may Heaven and man receive thy penitence!" "Father, I hate all pious cant; for I have nothing more to hope from Heaven, or to fear from man; but I love to triumph in the miſery of him to whom I owe my being. A love of riches, a love of power, and an undaunted courage, are all I inherit from my father. I never knew a parent's love: the ardour of my ſoul was checked; revenge became my ruling paſſion: a younger bro-

ther was independent; he was careſſed by my uncle; he taſted happineſs in the family of St. Aubigny, and I burnt to poiſon their joy. My firſt eſſay was the locket, which I gained from the ſoldier's wife. Antony hated the father, and rejoiced to join me in the ſcheme: I ſpoke the language of reformation; I aſſumed the pious cant of virtue; and I laughed in private at the credulous St. Aubigny. His darling boy too, hailed me as his friend. I confided to him my paſſion for the Lady Julia, and perſuaded the fool of honour that I meant to marry her, and that I might then ſurpriſe her by my rank. He allowed me to aſſume his name to win her; and as it was an affair of honour, he took a ſolemn oath never to divulge it. I reaped the reward, and he

bore

bore the puniſhment. Count Ricardo determined to ſearch deep into this affair; his fortune was to be Albert's. Rodolpho was the man who once attempted his life: I ſaved him from execution; and the generous act ſunk ſo deep in his mind, that he ſwore to be faithful to me. I at length perſuaded him, that Count Ricardo had renewed his intention of making him a public example; he vowed revenge: his people ſeized the old Count, and carried him to their abode; he fell ſick; medicines were procured for him. One of the gang, who, though a coward, had a cunning mind, procured a mixture for him, which, though it affected not his life, reduced him to a ſtate of idiocy; and long he wandered about the ruins known by the name of Father Paulo. I

gave the fellow money, but concealed the affair from the revengeful Rodolpho. My good fortune now ſeemed at an end, for the romantic lover found the means of reſcuing his Clara. I threw myſelf among them, and was praiſed as her preſerver. Dennis, aſhamed of the part he had acted, was won to my purpoſe. I had gone far, but I did not ſtop; my honoured father conſented to the diſpoſal of his rival ſon, and promiſed me the fortune. Henry, I rejoice to think, has at length fallen in the arms of death. I ſpoke of the noble paſſion of revenge only to Rodolpho, and he aſſiſted me in my ſchemes." "I have been the dupe of a mean ſoul'd villain," replied Rodolpho; "but my ſword—" "Let it reſt," ſaid Roderigo; "I heed thy threats no more; my

my own ſhall end me! I hated Henry: I am in part revenged; and I die contented, ſince the haughty Henry cannot triumph in my fall." "He died—he lives!" ſaid Henry, ruſhing forwards; "he lives to revenge himſelf on a villain!" His ſword was raiſed to the breaſt of Roderigo. Rodolpho exclaimed, "I have been betrayed!—to my arm vengeance belongs!" He ſnatched the ſword from Henry, and plunged it into the heart of Count Roderigo, who fell dead at their feet. "I am ſatisfied," ſaid he; "let Juſtice now have her part. I am content:" and he delivered himſelf into the hands of the ſoldiers who had entered the room, and now led him away. St. Aubigny, who on every occaſion addreſſed himſelf to Heaven, beheld with aſtoniſhment its preſent aweful

diſ-

diſpenſations, and endeavoured to calm the tumult in vain. Clara ſunk into the arms of Albert, and Henry caſt a look of pity on his fallen enemy, as he ruſhed towards his beloved father. The Lady Adelaide alone preſerved ſome preſence of mind; with her linen ſhe endeavoured to ſtaunch the wounds of her bleeding brother, but the guilty ſoul had fled. "See," ſaid St. Aubigny, "the aweful retribution of Heaven, who permits not the murderer of the juſt to be unrevenged. See the advantage of a pious education, and learn the happineſs of relying on our God in the hour of miſfortune." He ſaw the agitation of the baron, and ſaid no more. They retired from this ſcene of horror to the monaſtery. St. Aubigny ſhut himſelf in his own

own room, and ſpent the remainder of the night in prayer: all except Eleanor were reſtored to him, and he thanked his God for the bleſſing granted to his old age. The baron recovered, and took upon him one of the ſtricteſt of the religious orders: it ill accorded with his former way of life, and he died in a few weeks. The baroneſs wept over her faithful Conſtance, who died before aſſiſtance could be ſent to her. Bertram had fled, and was never heard of more. Lady Maud cloſed her life in a convent. Poor Count Ricardo had long reſted with the dead. The baroneſs felt a mournful attachment to the caſtle in the foreſt: it was repaired and inhabited by Henry, who received the hand of Lady Adelaide on the ſame day that gave to her delighted

lighted brother his long-loved Clara. Albert, as the heir of his father, took poſſeſſion of his fortune, reſigning Count Ricardo's to his ſiſter; and Clara gave up half of Baron Montalt's to her mother, who doated on her child, and rejoiced ſhe had found her ſo deſerving: but having been ſo long accuſtomed to the ſociety of Adelaide, with her ſhe reſided, though ſhe was a frequent gueſt at the caſtle of de Clifford; where St. Aubigny alſo found an aſylum in his old age. Clara delights to repay him all the kind affections he had ſhewn her; and as dear as her mother was to her, ſhe felt that the ties of gratitude were even ſtronger than thoſe of nature.

The ſervices of the honeſt-hearted Diego were

were never forgotten: every hour was now important; he paſſed his time between the two families, though Clara had the larger ſhare; and many a ſnug evening did he wear away at the neat cottage of old Catharine, who took care of the children of poor Margaret, excepting little Fanchon, who returned again to her dear miſtreſs. Induſtry and peace once more ſmiled in the little village of St. Maurice; and the ſun of happineſs gilded with its rays the latter days of Father St. Aubigny.

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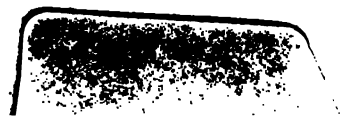
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